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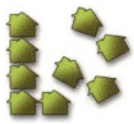

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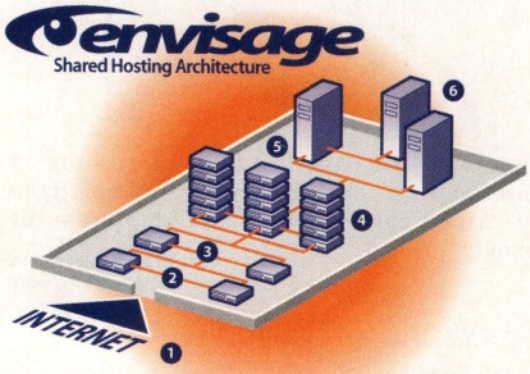

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Welcome

THE *PI* TEAM DIVULGE WHO THEY WOULD MOST LIKE TO CHAT TO, AND WHY...

James Thornton

Features Editor

"I'd like to have a tête-à-tête with Maradona to find out if he really touched the ball with his hand in the 1986 World Cup – and also ask him what diet he's on."

Jo Cole

Senior Sub Editor

"I'd chat with Agatha Christie and find out what she did when she disappeared. I think she got up to mischief – dressing up as Hercule Poirot on the odd occasion"

Nicky Bartlett

Senior Designer

"I'd like to talk to Buzz Aldrin to see if he really did walk on the moon in 1969, or if it was all part of some scary conspiracy formulated by the American government"

Lee Cornish

Multimedia Editor

Lee disappeared as we went to press, so we don't know his thoughts. We reckon he'd plump for Ghandi, though, as he's always talking about world peace and harmony.

Darren Lock

Contributor

"I would like to chat to Sid James, because I would love to hear that mucky laugh for real and see what he thought of Babs Windsor appearing in *EastEnders*."

Editor's welcome

What a difference a year makes. Just 12 months ago, we were all talking about the potential of broadband, and how we could all have really quick ADSL connections for less than £30 a month.

Fast forward a year, and you'll find that, for once, the promises have been fulfilled. Well over a million people now enjoy broadband, and BT's trigger system means that even rural punters have a chance of speedy downloads. The price war might be over for now, but we're still reaping the rewards in lower activation costs and very affordable monthly charges.

This is where we come in. You could trawl the hundreds of offers yourself, but it would take ages. Instead, take a gander at our roundup of the best deals around. And don't worry about wading through masses of irrelevant deals – we've split the broadband services up into different sections, so that you can instantly find the kind of deals catered to your needs. Check it out on page 22.

It's not all broadband ISPs, though. We've also got some advice on planning and booking the perfect getaway on the Net and also a comprehensive roundup of everything you've ever wanted to know about online chatting, but were afraid to ask. Oh, and don't forget to check page 42 for our feature on the 20 sickest sites on the Web – some of them really are quite rancid. Enjoy!

Thomas Watson, Editor
thomas@paragon.co.uk

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Why we're the number one Net magazine for:

In depth-features
Each issue of *Practical Internet* contains detailed features on the latest Net topics, brought to you by our team of leading writers. We cover a variety of subjects every month to ensure that you get the complete picture. Our comprehensive news section brings you the latest Internet developments in an unbiased and impartial style.

Expert help
Practical Internet is devoted to making your life as hassle-free as possible, with dedicated sections for Web design and browsing help. With more workshops than our rivals, we aim to keep you up-to-date with the latest techniques. What's more, our workshops are only written by experts, so you can expect excellent results every time.

Independent advice
We realise how important value for money is, so we provide impartial buying advice every month in our reviews section and buyers' guides. We also provide regular ISP roundups, in addition to money-saving features to keep you informed of the best deals around – and to ensure you carry on getting the best from the Net for less.

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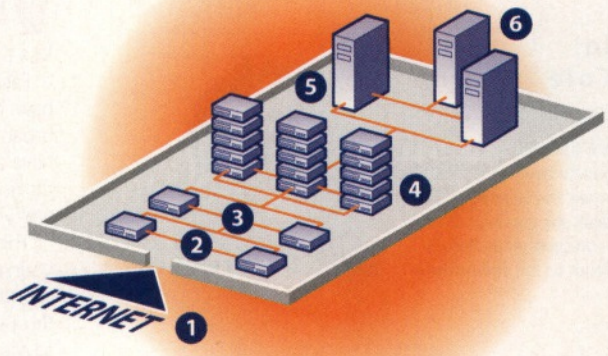
Shared Hosting Architecture



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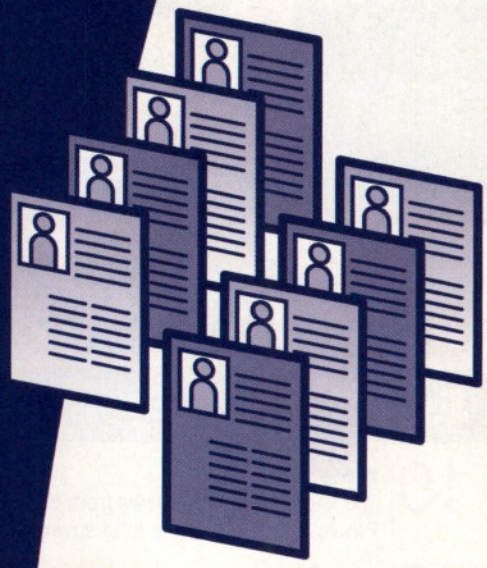

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* Some of the features mentioned above incur additional charges. Please see www.fasthosts.co.uk for full price tariff.

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Issue 80

Practical internet

Essentials

10 News
The latest broadband news from BT Wholesale, and a whole lotta spying stories

16 iCandy
Check out the latest must-have items of electronic beauty in our roundup of gadgets, gizmos and gear from CeBIT

19 Backchat
See what your fellow *Practical Internet* readers have to say for themselves in the pages dedicated to our virtual postbag

76 Subscriptions
Get your hands on a bargain with our new subscriptions deal. Save a monster £26 on the price of 13 issues, and pick up three free issues of *Practical Web Projects* as well

93 Your Business Online
Essential advice for small business and eCommerce owners, including a discussion on the perils and pitfalls of direct marketing, or spam as it's known throughout the land

122 CD contents
Let your fingers do the walking to this section for a comprehensive guide to how to get the most from your software extravaganza on this month's CD

126 Buyers' guide
Pick an ISP, any one you like – we've listed over 400 of the beggars in our guide

22 Which ISP?
With so many new deals announced every week, it's easy to get lost in a sea of ADSL. We show you how you can pick the right broadband ISP for your needs

Reviews

109 Paint Shop Pro 8 is finally here. We put Jasc's image editor through its paces

Web browsing

78 Take the Net by the scruff of the neck with our dedicated browsing section filled to the brim with advice on getting the most from your Net connection and software

78 Tweak tunes, create perfect playlists and stream your own radio station with JetAudio

80 Improve the features of Outlook Express with our guide to the greatest plug-ins available

82 Get to grips with the cutely-named BearShare, a Gnutella client with lots to offer the weary file-sharer

84 We show you how to remove all-known evidence with the help of the appropriately-named Washee

86 We've all got the DivX codec by now, but how many have bothered with the cool supplied player?

88 By day, he's Web manager Clive Parker. By night, he dons his mask to solve your browsing problems

Contents

30 Bag a bargain holiday

Save wads of cash by using the Net to fly to sunnier climes instead of traipsing down the rainy high street

36 New ways to chat online

Get to grips with the latest online chat technologies in our guide to transforming yourself into a chatting guru

42 The sickest sites on the Web

We round up 20 sites that will amuse, bemuse and bewilder you. Just don't visit some of them after a big meal…

Webmaster

47 27 pages of Web design

Develop your Web-building skills with our section devoted to bringing you the latest and greatest design techniques

48 See how Looney Tunes fashioned a fantastic cartoon-based site

50 Confused by the constant talk of dynamic sites and what they do? Let our guide enlighten you

52 Generate amazing Web pages with nothing more than a couple of pictures, and a bit of Flash MX expertise

58 Use your full version of NetObjects Fusion 4, found on the cover CD, to create a dazzling site

62 Treat your visitors to an online quiz with the brilliant Opus Pro

66 Learn how to ditch the tables and lay your pages out entirely with columns and a nifty bit of CSS shenanigans

68 Create your own shopping cart with PHP and MySQL in the first of our three-part guide to getting into eCommerce hand coding

70 *Practical Internet's* very own stage star, James Seabright, casts aside his adoring fans to ease your Web design woes

THE DESIGN PRINCIPLES THAT MADE LOONEY TUNES A WINNER – PAGE 48
EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO BUILD STUNNING SITES
Webmaster
IN-DEPTH FEATURES
STEP-BY-STEP WORKSHOPS
HAND-CODING MASTERCLASS
WELCOME...
IT'S A COMMON problem – you want to create your own page, but don't have reams of text and content to justify spending too long on it. The result is usually that you end up with a poor quality site that impresses no-one. It doesn't have to be like that, though. We show you how a little bit of Flash MX trickery can create the kind of sites that will make people want to visit time and again.
If this is too much effort for you, give the template-based NetObjects Fusion 4 a butcher's. I promise that it'll have you designing pages within minutes, and nobody will ever know that you had to do so little work.
Thomas Watson, Editor
What's inside...
48 How did they do that?
We talk to the people at Loony Tunes to find out about their cartoon site
50 Dynamic Web sites
Let us introduce you to the world of dynamic Web design
52 Create a dazzling site
You don't need tons of content to make dazzling pages – just Flash MX
58 Build a site the easy way
Get yourself a fantastic Web presence with the help of NetObjects Fusion
62 Create an online quiz
It's easy to give your site an interactive edge with the help of Opus Pro
66 Structure page design
Ditch the tables, and create a page based on columns
68 Create a catalogue
Learn how to create your own product catalogue using PHP and MySQL
70 Web design Q&A
Ease your design dilemmas with our very own rising star of stage and screen – James Seabright
Flash MX
CREATE A STUNNING PERSONAL WEB SITE IN UNDER AN HOUR USING NO MORE THAN A LITTLE FLASH MX EXPERTISE. SEE PAGE 52
Also in Webmaster this issue...
Page 58
Page 68
ISSUE 80 | PRACTICAL INTERNET | 47

News

All the latest Web sites, products and services

BT broadens the broadband net

BT WHOLESALE PROMISES FASTER, MORE WIDELY AVAILABLE ADSL, BUT IS IT ALL A LITTLE LATE?

BROADBAND USERS ARE set to enjoy an even richer choice of services following the announcement by BT Wholesale of a series of ADSL initiatives.

The developments offer subscribers the chance to plump for faster or slower DSL connections, and promise to increase coverage of broadband across the country.

BT will trial a new 1Mbps broadband service for bandwidth-hungry Net users this autumn, along with a 256Kbps 'midband' product aimed at entry-level customers. Though prices won't be announced until later in the summer, the midband service is thought to be significantly cheaper than the price BT Wholesale charges ISPs for its 512kbps service.

Speaking at the announcement of the new initiatives, Paul Reynolds, Chief Executive of BT Wholesale, said: "Today we are announcing new products in direct response to our service provider customers' demands.

"We are making tremendous progress on all fronts. We now have more than 750,000 end users, an important milestone on the way to our target of one million ADSL connections by summer this year."

BT 'off the pace'

While most ISPs welcomed BT's move, some argue the company has been slow in giving punters what they want.

"The decision to introduce 256Kb and 1Mb services has been made a little late in the game," said Steve Horley, ISP and Business Development Director of Tiscali.

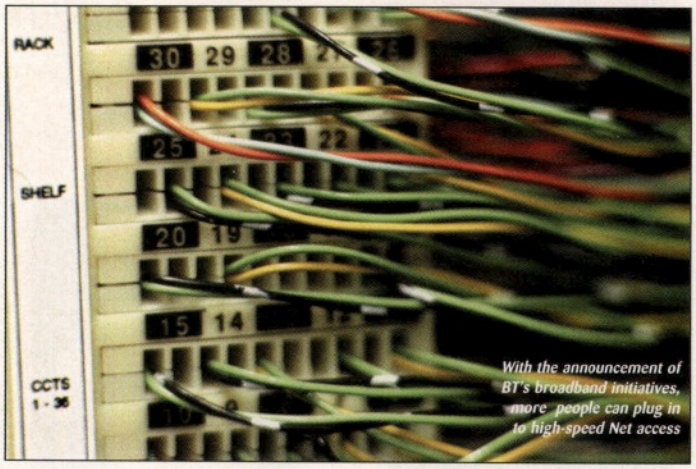
"We've had a 256Kb service since before Christmas and we know it's popular, especially with people who aren't hardcore video streamers or music downloaders and just want faster Web browsing and email."

Unlike the other major ISPs, Tiscali has been able to offer both midband and 1Mbps services to its subscribers for some time, as it uses BT Wholesale's DataStream network rather than the conventional IPStream network, which is subject to the new changes.

"THE DECISION TO INTRODUCE 256Kb AND 1Mb SERVICES HAS BEEN MADE A LITTLE LATE IN THE GAME" STEVE HORLEY

Reaching out

As well as introducing new broadband speed brackets, BT is also extending the reach of ADSL.



With the announcement of BT's broadband initiatives, more people can plug in to high-speed Net access

The company has been testing ADSL over greater distances from the exchange than at present, and has worked out that it can achieve a quality service while relaxing the limits on this loss in signal strength.

BT estimates that the proposal, to be launched in June, will extend the reach of broadband from 5.5km from an exchange to around 6km. It reckons this will bring two thirds of those customers currently out of reach (around 600,000 people), into the coverage area.

Bob Jones, Managing Director of Equiinet, and long-term critic of BT over its broadband rollout said: "BT was overly cautious when it first introduced ADSL but now that it knows it can deploy it with very few risks of faults, it feels ready to widen its availability."

STOP PRESS...STOP PRESS...STOP PRESS...

BT slashes costs for broadband ISPs

WHOLESALE ADSL PRICE CUTS ONLY MANAGE TO MUSTER A LUKEWARM REACTION FROM BROADBAND INTERNET SERVICE PROVIDERS

BT HAS CUT the wholesale cost of broadband connections, following its decision to slash the price of fixed-line phone calls.

The cuts mean that the price ISPs pay for a standard ADSL connection will drop from £14.75 to £13 per month. BT also announced massive savings for service providers which deliver business broadband connections with monthly charges slashed by more than 50 percent.

BT chief Ben Verwaayen said: "These price cuts will benefit everyone from service providers to consumers and businesses and will ensure the UK continues to have some of the lowest prices in Europe."

However, it's unclear whether consumers will feel an immediate benefit as ISPs remain reluctant to introduce immediate price cuts. Many are waiting to see other initiatives explored by BT such as local loop unbundling, which would give rival operators access to BT's network.

"We welcome any cuts in wholesale pricing but we also want to see the market opened up to alternative carriers," said a Freeserve spokesperson.

shorts

→ Web site owners can now have a slice of China in their hands, following the country's decision to offer its domain names to the West. For the first time ever, sites outside China can register .cn domain names. More details are available from NeuStar (**www.neustar.com**).

→ Broadband users can spread their connection throughout their home following the launch of a new networking solution from BT (**www.bt.com**). The BT Home Network 1200 uses existing telephone wiring to enable up to 10 computers to share simultaneous ADSL broadband, multi-gaming sessions and use of files and peripherals such as printers.

Got a news story?
Please contact
James Thornton
Telephone: 01202 209379
Fax: 01202 299955
Email: jamest@paragon.co.uk

Front line news

NET OPENS UP NEW WAYS OF FOLLOWING THE WAR, WHILE HACK ATTACKS RISE DURING CONFLICT

THE NET HAS provided a unique way for people to chart the latest developments in the Gulf conflict, as the number of soldiers blogging online increases.

Since fighting broke out in Iraq, war-themed blogs have become a popular alternative news source, often beating television and radio to breaking stories.

The rise of these sites proves that blogging is no longer the preserve of sad geeks, mouthing off about celebrities and TV programmes. Having gone mainstream, Web logs made it possible for soldiers to provide daily updates to the folks back home about the rigours of war.

Popular war blogs include **www.blogsofwar.com**, **www.sgtstryker.com**, and **www.lt-smash.us**, which is run by 'LT Smash', a reservist in the US Navy stationed in the Gulf.

"My son's been blogging for maybe a year now," LT's father told Reuters. "He originally started it as a way to communicate with his family. Now he's getting thousands of hits a day."

Meanwhile, anti-war protesters are turning to the Net to vent their anger against the conflict, defacing hundreds of British and American government sites.

Mikko Hypponen, Manager of anti-virus software firm F-Secure said: "We've had reports of 800 defacements today, which is ten times more than a week ago, which tells me groups are increasingly turning to the Internet to protest."

Daddy's girl

WOMAN PUTS FATHER UP FOR SALE ONLINE

WHILE MOST PEOPLE use online auctions to shift beanie babies, old comics or unwanted furniture, a Norwegian woman has decided to use the Web to get shot of her dad.

Nina Melhum Groenland of Trondheim, posted the auction after her father moved in with her following the break-up of his relationship. The 52-year-old cabbie was described in the posting as being "tall, dark and slim and in his best age," though she added, "I'm sick of him since he is living in my house."

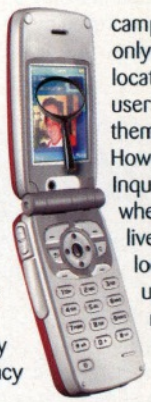
Although it was initially intended as a joke, Groenland may now consider flogging her old man after receiving a genuine enquiry from a "good-natured lady in Trondheim."

ebay.co.uk
Browse | Sell | Services | Search | Help | Community
new users, click here!
what are you looking for?
Categories
Great offers on top products
Spotlight's On...

Looking to get rid of a loved-one? Online auctions could be the way to go...

Mobile tracker

NEW SITE ALLOWS USERS TO HUNT PEOPLE DOWN BY TRACING THEIR MOBILE PHONE



PARANOID BOSSES AND suspicious spouses can now confirm or deny their fears following the launch of a site which allows visitors to track mobile phone users.

VeriLocation (**www.verilocation.com**) allows users to pinpoint the location of a mobile phone to within 100 metres and even provides a map of the area.

However, the service is already raising a few eyebrows with privacy campaigners. The system is only supposed to display the location of mobile phone users who have agreed to let themselves be found. However, according to The Inquirer (**www.theinquirer.net**), when the system first went live it was displaying the location of any Vodafone user rather than randomising their location, though this glitch has now been fixed.

Hotmail caps email use

MSN CRACKS DOWN ON SPAMMERS

MSN HAS INTRODUCED a cap on the number of emails Hotmail users can send, in an effort to clamp down on spammers.

While the company refuses to confirm the new limit, a Reuters report quotes MSN's lead product Manager, Lisa Gurry, as saying that users will be banned from sending mail to more than 100 email addresses in a 24-hour period.

The limit only applies to free users of Hotmail, so anyone who subscribes to MSN Extra Storage and MSN 8 will be unaffected by the email cap.

MSN spokesman, Ben Philipson, said: "MSN is committed to help stop the problem of spam and this is one way of preventing spammers using Hotmail as a vehicle to send unwanted emails."

MSN: taking steps to can the spam

Star struck

TO CELEBRATE THIS MONTH'S ONLINE CHAT FEATURE, WE ROUND UP THE KINGS AND QUEENS OF THE TALK SHOWS

Jerry Springer

www.jerryspringer.com

Famous for entertaining loud-mouth hookers, cheating husbands and assorted trailer trash, Jerry is a God among daytime talkshow hosts. His official site contains a photo album, video previews and allows you to email crazy stories about your personal life.

Terry Wogan

www.bbc.co.uk/radio2/shows/wogan/biography.shtml

We reckon Wogan is the best thing to ever happen to British broadcasting. His Eighties chat show saw Tezza famously quiz the likes of Margaret Thatcher, Madonna and David Icke. These days Terry hosts the breakfast show on Radio 2.

Trisha

www.angliatv.com/trisha

While her shock value may not be as great as Jerry Springer, Trisha still provides a decent collection of weirdos every week. Fans of the ITV program can exchange comments in the site's chat room and there are also plenty of wallpapers and screensavers to download. →

News shorts

→ Fancy having a flutter on rugby's Heineken Cup final or wagering some wonga on the British Masters? Victor Chandler has revamped its online betting site (**www.victorchandler.co.uk**), allowing punters to place bets on sporting events. The site boasts new features such as top five bets, next five events and 'in-running' where you can view events happening right now.

→ As waiting times continue to grow, a Manchester GP has turned to his mobile phone to help him respond to patients more quickly. Dr Badal Pal allows patients to send an SMS to his phone in order to pick up their test results, rather than having to wait weeks to find out.

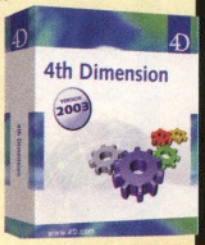
NEW Software

FIND OUT ABOUT THE LATEST AND GREATEST INTERNET PROGRAMS

4D Standard Edition 2003

www.4duk.com

Now that all the hullabaloo over the dotcom boom and bust has died down, canny online businesses are finally beginning to make money from the Internet. This latest version of 4D's database development package is designed to give e-entrepreneurs a fighting chance of making a packet online. The program boasts a new method editor, as well as integrated compiler and support for Web services such as XML, SOAP and WSDL.



£229.12

Preventon Secure Internet Desktop

www.preventon.com

Designed to give you everything you need to fumigate your PC against nasty Net bugs, the Preventon Secure Internet Desktop software incorporates the cream of Preventon's protection utilities, including its Sophos-powered anti-virus solution, a personal firewall and a handy content filter to block adult photographs on Web sites and emails.

£TBC

Xara Online FAQ

www.xaraonline.com

No site is complete without an Xara FAQ section to answer questions on some of the more technical questions that arise. This useful add-on for the Xara Online site-building service aims to provide everything you need to add an FAQ to your site within minutes, and also allows your support staff to update the FAQ in an instant.

£3.18 p/m

→Government rethinks 'Snoopers Charter'

HOME OFFICE FORCED TO REVISE PLANS TO PROVIDE ACCESS TO NET RECORDS FOLLOWING OUTCRY FROM ONLINE PRIVACY CAMPAIGNERS

THE GOVERNMENT HAS altered its plans for a 'snoopers charter' following public outcry over authorities being given access to phone, email and Internet records.

Last year, the Home Office revealed sweeping changes to its prying powers as it plotted to extend the list of authorities that could demand access to Net records.

However, the Government has now amended its proposals, promising Net users that the new laws would "strike a better balance" between the privacy of the citizen and the need to investigate crime and protect the public.

Under the new plans, access to certain types of information, such as itemised phone bills, will only be granted after being approved by an independent third party. The revised proposals will also restrict the type of information public authorities are given access to, and limit the reasons why authorities can request the information.

The prying game

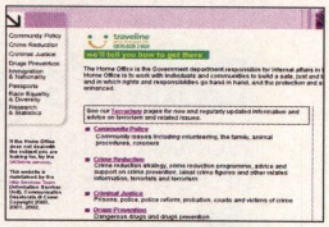
"In a democratic society there is always a difficult balance to strike between respect for privacy and ensuring crime is tackled," explained Home Office Minister Bob Ainsworth.

"We are tailoring the amount of access to the need for it to allay the concerns of members of the public."

Despite the amendment to the charter, certain privacy campaigners are still unconvinced, saying that more needs to be done to prevent misuse of the system.

Ian Brown, Director of the Foundation for Information Policy Research told The Register: "The Home Office now seems to understand the problems we pointed out last summer."

"They haven't quite got their new proposals right, but this seems to be a genuine consultation and we look forward to helping them improve their plans."



*Privacy campaigners have caused the Home Office (**www.homeoffice.gov.uk**) to temper its charter*

Amazon packs it in

AMAZON SPOILS THE PARTY FOR NET USERS WHO SNAP UP PDA 'BARGAIN'

AMAZON HAS DISAPPOINTED hundreds of bargain-hunting Net users who thought they'd scooped the sale of the century on the online store.

News of a pricing discrepancy on the site spread throughout the land via email, as punters rushed to snap up top-of-the-range iPaq handheld computers for as little as £7.32 each.

The iPaq H5450 pocket PC, which normally costs £500, was advertised on Amazon for only £23.04, while the H1910 was offered at £7.32 – a saving of some £270 on the normal cost.

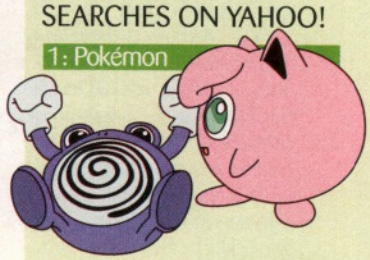
After spotting its mistake, Amazon put the dampeners on the deal for the scores of bargain-hunters who had done their best to place an order for the cut-price device.

"Despite our best efforts, with the millions of items available on our Web site, pricing errors can occur," said an Amazon statement.

"In keeping with our conditions of use and our pricing availability policy, we will be cancelling orders made for the HP iPaq pocket PCs."

Stat attack

TOP TEN VIDEO GAME SEARCHES ON YAHOO!



1: Pokémon
2: Shadowbane
3: Grand Theft Auto: Vice City
4: Everquest
5: Final Fantasy
6: Zelda
7: Warcraft 3
8: Diablo 2
9: Pac-Man
10: The Sims

Source: Yahoo! Buzz Index (buzz.yahoo.com)

→

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axamba
www.axamba.com

News

shorts

→ Anyone who thinks 'speed dating' is what Linford Christie and Sally Gunnell get up to on a romantic night out should leg it down to **www.email4love.com**. The online dating site has launched a new 'e-whisper' facility, which allows singles to hold up to 20 simultaneous conversations with other members, ideal for the e-speed dater.

→ Christian Aid week starts on 11 May and to celebrate the event, the charity has created a morality map of Britain, allowing you to find out if you have any morals. The 'Herometer' at **www.christianaidweek.org.uk** invites you to put your scruples to the test with an online quiz, after which you can prove you're a real hero by pledging some cash to the cause.

Net watch

INTERNET FREEDOM'S **CHRIS ELLISON** MONITORS THE LATEST ONLINE DEVELOPMENTS

SINCE FEBRUARY, THE Internet has been full of 'anti-war' misgivings. There's even a Web poll by Lorenzo Wood aiming to show how out of touch Tony Blair is with what the people think (**www.whatbritainthinks.com**). In the wake of protesters marching on London, *Mac User* columnist Charles Shaar Murray claimed that "the Internet has been a vital force in building the anti-war movement".

In this age of political passivity, why were so many drawn to oppose the war, substituting walking shoes for their Web browsers? When I participated in

"THE INTERNET IS NOT REVERSING THE CURRENT CYNICAL TREND BUT SIMPLY EXPRESSING IT"

the first anti-war protests over a decade ago, there were only a few thousand of us. Is Murray right to identify the Net as responsible for building an anti-war movement?

It would be remarkable indeed if the Net were able to galvanise political opposition in today's cynical times. Closer inspection reveals, however, that the Internet is not reversing the current cynical trend but simply expressing it. The opposition to war does not seem to be driven by commitment to Iraq's right to freedom from Western interference. Instead, it seems driven by lack of trust in the motives of politicians and the US and British governments.

In fact it is not an anti-war movement at all, but an expression of disillusionment with politics, politicians and modern institutions. In building this disillusionment, Mr Murray might take note, the communications medium of the Internet played little part.

Internet Freedom can be contacted on ***campaign@netfreedom.org****. The campaign's Web site is at* ***www.netfreedom.org***

→ Ballot boxes open online

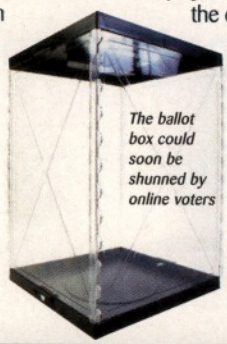
E-VOTING GOES LIVE IN AN EFFORT TO BEAT VOTER APATHY AND ENCOURAGE A GREATER TURNOUT FROM THE YOUNGER ELECTORATE

ELECTRONIC VOTING HAS finally come to Britain as thousands of Net users across the country are set to turn out online to cast their ballot in the May local elections.

As part of the largest electronic voting pilot in Europe, 18 local councils were selected by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to implement various methods of digital voting. It's hoped that the move will encourage more people to make the effort to vote.

The people of Swindon have been voting from the comfort of their sofas after the town became the first to pioneer interactive TV elections. The townsfolks were given a special PIN number allowing them to vote via digital television, telephone and special kiosks, as well as on the Internet. "Reversing the gradual decline in the voter turnout at general and local elections is vital for the health of the UK democratic process," explained Angus Drever, CEO of MMTV, which created the digital TV voting system for Swindon Borough Council.

"Digital TV is most subscribed to by the 18-30 audience – the most apathetic voter group. We believe it will play an integral role in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of the electoral process – turning on, not off the public.



The ballot box could soon be shunned by online voters

Other district and borough councils involved in the revolutionary pilot scheme include Ipswich, Stratford-on-Avon and Norwich, where the electorate has been encouraged to vote via text messaging and touch-tone telephones.

Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne, City Council Executive Member for Public Services in Norwich, said that although e-voting is still in its infancy, it's likely to have a major impact on the democratic process.

He said: "We are hoping to tap into a new group of voters and get them interested in politics by offering them a modern and accessible means of casting their votes."

*Swindon's Borough Council (**www.swindon.gov.uk**) has welcomed online voting*

Hoax of the month

LAWMEN GO BANANAS AFTER EMAIL HOAXER ACCUSES THEM OF BEING 'RUTHLESS BASTARDS'

IF THERE'S ONE person you don't want to wind up in an email hoax, it's a high-profile lawyer.

However, that's exactly what one dim-witted scammer did when he posted a message to over a thousand Net users purporting to be from a partner at a Scottish law firm and promising to be a 'ruthless bastard' who would 'screw the opposition' on behalf of his clients in legal proceedings.

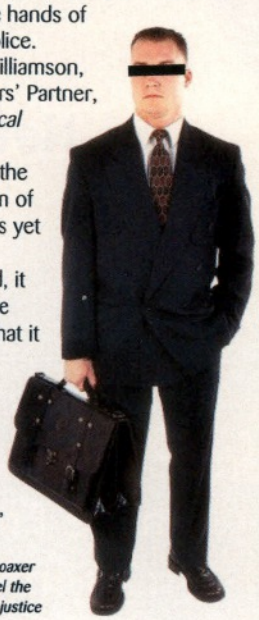
The four line email was made to look like it came from Dundee-based legal practice, Blackadders, and was even signed with the real name, email address and phone number of one of the firm's top lawyers.

"If you want to raise a Civil Court action against someone anywhere in Scotland then I am your man," read the email.

"I am a ruthless bastard and I will screw the opposition to the wall even it means bending a few rules."

Naturally, Blackadders didn't take too kindly to the hoaxer's flattery and as a result, the matter is now in the hands of Tayside police.

Scott Williamson, Blackadders' Partner, told *Practical Internet*: "Although the exact origin of the email is yet to be discovered, it can only be deduced that it was sent out by someone who wanted to cause disruption."



One hapless hoaxer could soon feel the strong arm of justice

Tracked suit

FASHION RETAILER KEEPS TABS ON CLOTHES

CLOTHES SHOPPERS COULD soon be bugged after Benetton launched a scheme to tag its garments with microchips.

The Italian fashion retailer has introduced 'smart tag' technology to track products from the point of manufacture to the moment they are sold.

Although there's no indication Benetton intends to track its customers, the fact the technology exists has got privacy groups worried that firms will be able to spy on customers.

"An RFID tag could be programmed to store information about, say, the person who bought a garment," said Ted Zwibel of Psion Teklogix, which makes the supply chain software involved in the Benetton system.

→ Funnyman Eddie Izzard is embracing the latest Net technology with the launch of his new site at **www.eddieizzard.com**. The new-look site has been set up to celebrate his UK and worldwide tour. It features video streaming, MMS and SMS capabilities and allows Eddie to update its content by sending a text message from his mobile.

→ You don't need to head for the bright lights of Vegas to make a killing on the roulette wheel. Casino Fortune has thrown open the doors to its UK Casino site at **www.casinofortune.co.uk**, allowing visitors to don their monocles and win big on any of its 55 different games.

Always one step ahead, Madonna has turned her arm to MP3s

A kind of Madge-ic

MADONNA GETS INTO THE GROOVE AFTER RELEASING MP3 SINGLE ONLINE

NET MUSIC EXPERTS reckon that artists are now taking online music distribution more seriously, following Madonna's decision to release an MP3 version of her latest single via the Web.

For the first time in her career, the Material Girl sent out her music digitally to her legion of online fans, making an MP3 version of 'American Life' available for visitors to download on her official site (**www.madonna.com**).

The so-called 'Madonna Project' saw banner ads for the single appear on fan sites and blogs across the Internet, with sites whose adverts resulted in sales of the single being offered credits towards lots of lovely Madonna merchandise and prizes.

"The Madonna Project is a top-secret initiative to revolutionise how music is distributed on the Web," the star's site said.

"The more singles sold through your site or links, the better your chance to win a pat on the back, a gold star and some serious Madonna prizes."

The project marks something of a turnaround for the artist who became one of the first stars to kick up a fuss when her single found its way on to Napster before it was officially launched.

Spies like us

INTERNET USERS GIVEN CHANCE TO SIGN UP AND BECOME REAL LIVE JAMES BOND

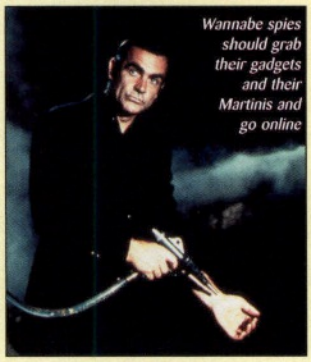
EVER FANCIED WORKING for Her Majesty's secret service? The Net should be your first port of call as the Government is using it to recruit budding 007s.

MI5 and GCHQ are abandoning traditional cloak-and-dagger recruitment methods in an effort to snap up high-quality graduate recruits via the Net. Both hush-hush organisations, along with the Atomic Weapons Establishment, which manages the UK's nuclear capabilities, have posted ads at Milkround (**www.milkround.com**), a site aimed at university leavers.

"Unusual Government departments need quality graduates as much as any other company, which means that more and more people can fulfil their aspirations, no matter how diverse," explained Tom Hughes, Managing Director of Milkround.

"If analysing secret intelligence is something you think you would be proficient at and [you're] qualified, there is no reason why you can't pursue it."

The decision to advertise online represents a departure for MI5 and the Cheltenham-based GCHQ, as the organisations attempt to become more accessible. This includes advertising in newspapers and creating Web sites to let people know more about what they get up to at **www.mi5.gov.uk** and **www.gchq.gov.uk**.



Wannabe spies should grab their gadgets and their Martinis and go online

Do your part for drinkers

WEST COUNTRY BOOZERS TURN TO THE WEB TO HELP PRESERVE THEIR PUBLIC HOUSES

FORGET DOLPHINS OR underprivileged children, you can now adopt your very own boozer thanks to a new Net campaign.

Regulars in Gloucestershire's country pubs have been put up for adoption in a bid to raise cash for rural drinking establishments. Twenty drinkers are currently available on the 'Adopt a local' service, inspired by similar projects run by zoos.

Adopting a patron costs £20 a year, which is split between charities supporting rural pubs and the drinker's beer kitty. In return, sponsors get an official certificate, a signed photo, a beer mat and a newsletter providing updates on the sozzled adoptee's antics.

Practical Internet has chosen to adopt 90-year-old Arthur Ayres, nicknamed 'Weasel', who has been drinking at the Tavern Inn in Kemble for 52 years. Former gamekeeper Arthur is such a seasoned boozer he even has his own chair with his name on a plague in the Tavern.

Landlady Nyra Stepp said: "He comes in most days and last year we worked out that he has drunk an entire swimming pool of beer."

To adopt your own drinker, pick up your mouse and stagger on down to **www.pubs2000.com**.

Arthur Ayres: he's drunk a swimming pool of booze in his time, and now you can adopt him

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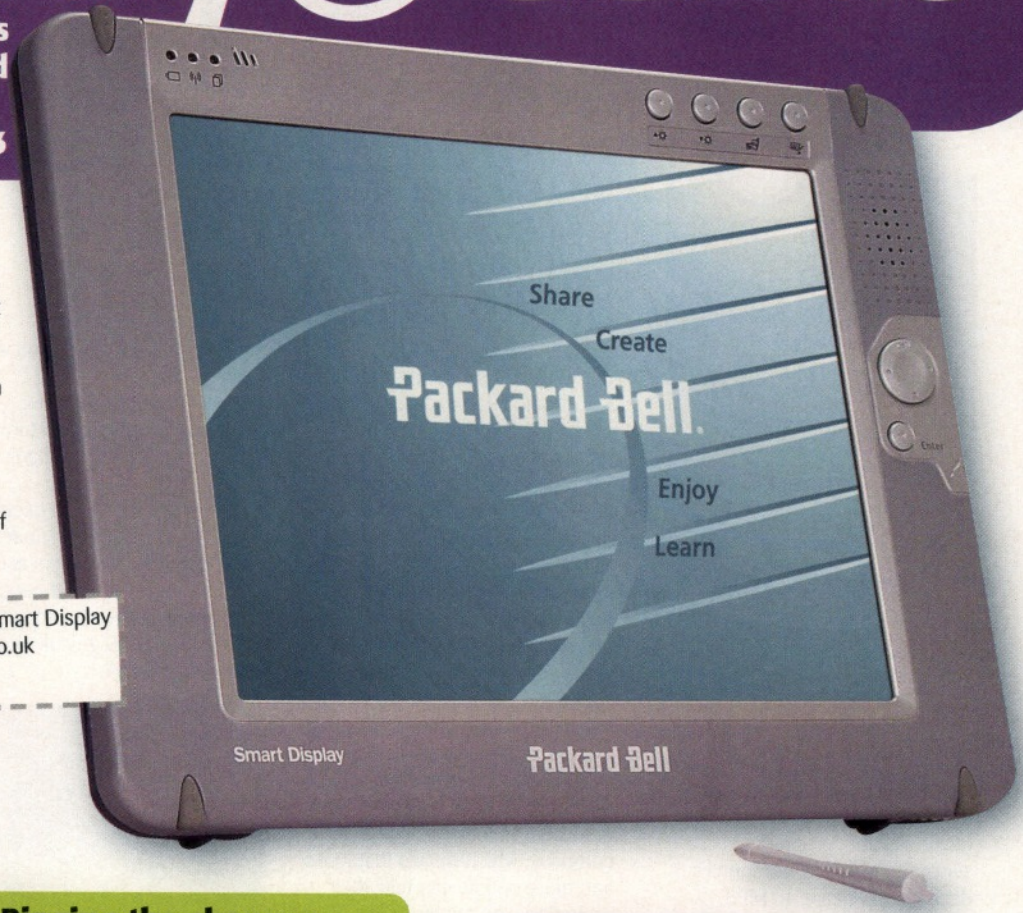
iCandy@CeBit

This issue, iCandy previews the best products launched at the world's biggest computer fair – CeBIT 2003



Smart move

As more and more hardware developers cut the cables on their products, Smart Displays could become the only way to view the Net within a few years. Packard Bell is the latest firm to get in on the act, unveiling its new 10-inch display at the CeBIT event. The wireless monitor is compatible with any Windows XP-based machine, allowing you to surf the Web from every nook and cranny of your dwelling.

Product: Packard Bell Smart Display
URL: www.packardbell.co.uk
Telephone: N/A

£TBC

Ringing the changes

In the bad old days mobile phones were only useful for ringing people up. However, the rate at which handset technology is improving, you'll soon be able to do pretty much anything on them. This quirky number is the first mobile to be equipped with Cubasis, a four-track recording system that allows you to mix your grooves then share them with mates or use them as ring tones. It also boasts its own camera with built-in flash.

Product: Siemens M55
URL: www.siemens-mobile.com
Telephone: 08705 334411

£TBC

Style guru

Printing out snaps from a digicam normally involves a whole lot of faffing about and juggling memory cards. Epson's new baby aims to change all that, though, as it's the first printer on the market to feature new USB Direct Print technology, allowing you to print directly from a digital camera.

Product: Epson Stylus Photo 935
URL: www.epson.co.uk
Telephone: 0800 220546

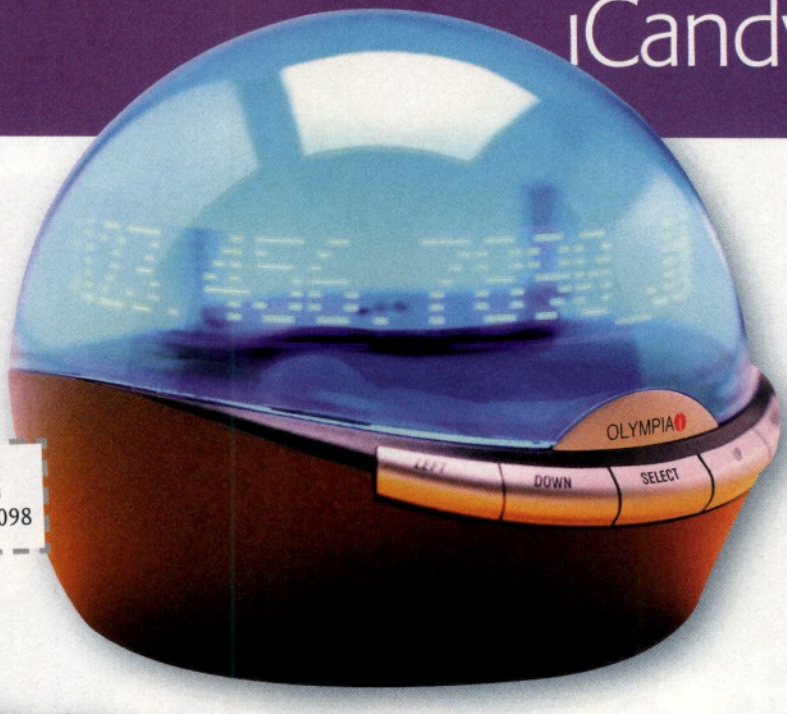
£269

Globe trotter

Truly one of the weirdest looking gizmos at the CeBIT trade fair, you might think that the Info-Globe has come straight from the set of *Mork and Mindy*. In actual fact, the device lets users connect to a home phone line and displays information such as SMS messages and caller ID as rotating 'floating' text using blue LEDs. Cosmic.

Product: Info-Globe
URL: www.wave-tele.com
Telephone: 01256 761098

£39



High fidelity

Pixel freaks were taken to heaven as Fujifilm revealed its innovative new digicam at CeBIT. The FinePix F700 becomes the first digital camera to incorporate Fourth Generation Super CCD SR technology. For those not up to speed with their digital imaging terminology, this new 'High Fidelity' sensor system is designed to capture highlight and shadow detail missed by conventional digicams.

Product: Fujifilm FinePix F700
URL: www.fujifilm.co.uk
Telephone: N/A

£TBC

Band on the run

Music lovers will soon be able to stuff themselves silly on tunes via 02's new 'music over mobile' service. The service, currently being trialled in the UK and Germany, allows users to select, retrieve and store the latest chart-toppers via their GPRS-enabled handset into a specially-designed digital music player.

Product: O2 'Music over mobile'
URL: www.o2.co.uk
Telephone: N/A

£TBC

Product: Microsoft Media2Go
URL: www.microsoft.com
Telephone: N/A

£TBC

Go-getter

A few years back we could only dream of watching movies on the toilet or listening to music up a tree. Thankfully, it will soon become a reality thanks to Microsoft's Media2Go device, which allows you to store video, audio and pictures and then experience them from wherever you may be. The unit, due for release next year, boasts 20Gb of space – which is enough for up to 175 hours of video, 8,000 songs or 30,000 photos.

TWO ONE
V21 STANDARD
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via secure control panel
VISIT: www.v21.co.uk or call the sign up hotline on:
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PRACTICAL INTERNET,
PARAGON PUBLISHING,
ST PETER'S ROAD,
BOURNEMOUTH,
BH1 2JS

We think Opera romps home in the browser races, but not all of you agree with our opinions

LETTER OF THE MONTH

The need for speed

FIRST OF ALL, congratulations on your achievement as the fastest growing Internet magazine. I've been reading *PI* for years, so it comes as no surprise to me – your content is always right on the money.

The main reason I am emailing, though, is about the huge Opera feature in issue 78. Although it was a great in-depth analysis, one thing disappointed me.

'Speed' must be the most touted reason for switching to Opera, so I read that section of the article with interest – only to find it pretty useless really! The test bed was a broadband connection, but the IE times were totally unrealistic. The Internet Explorer times quoted for loading three single pages were eight seconds, 20 seconds and nine seconds respectively. Those sounded far too long for the sites used, so I tried it with my IE6 and Blueyonder 512Kbps connection. After emptying my cache, each one took less than four seconds to fully load – which is far more realistic for a broadband connection, loading well-designed Web sites that are known for their efficient, fast loading designs.

With IE typically loading pages in under four seconds with a broadband connection, I have never understood the 'Opera is fast' selling point. How much faster than four seconds do people want to surf?!

Apart from that – great feature!

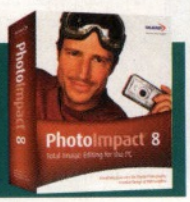
Rocky

We're pleased that our feature made you want to race to Internet Explorer's corner in its defence, Rocky. While you might not agree with the figures quoted, the main difference we try to emphasise is the leanness of Opera – while Internet Explorer and Netscape are both mammoth 30Mb downloads, Opera is a much more slimline 3Mb. This tends to result in quicker operation, mainly because there's less clutter to wade through in the route between typing the URL and the Web page appearing. And as for your point that four seconds is fast enough for anyone, we're of the opinion that it can always be faster. We were obviously picking fairly streamlined sites, but remember that the majority of Web pages are much more bloated, which results in far slowing loader times. Until all Web pages appear in browser windows the instant the URL is typed in, then we'll be on the lookout for ways of making the process quicker.

WIN A PRIZE

Not only do you get the immense satisfaction of having your letter printed in the UK's fastest growing Internet magazine, but every month one of our letter writers wins a great prize. Yes, if you write in to us at the address above, you stand a chance of winning a copy of PhotoImpact 8, Ulead's envelope-pushing graphics package.

We reviewed PhotoImpact 8 in Issue 74, and loved it so much that we awarded it the coveted *Practical Internet* Star Buy award. Worth a cool £89.99, this is one of the best image manipulation programs around. To find out more about PhotoImpact 8, pop along to www.ulead.co.uk or phone 01327 844755.



Don't like Opera...

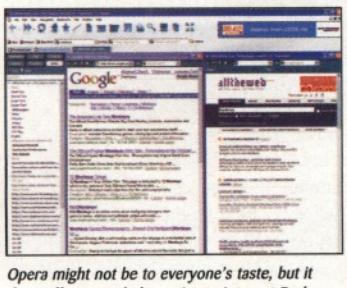
May I ask, slightly tongue-in-cheek, how much Opera paid you to put their browser on your CD and allow them to write the article in the March 2003 issue of *PI* magazine?

I can't believe a magazine of your standing actually loaded it into a PC and ran it for a few days. It has more bugs than a herd of water buffalo! The version you spoke of, V7.0, is actually a Beta version, V7.1 was the 'final' version. The current edition, V7.3, is still bug-ridden but slightly better. The highly praised 'mouse strokes' work if they feel like it. There are download problems with many Web pages. The M2 mail program still has compatibility problems trying to import from Outlook Express.

The biggest problem with Opera is that they don't issue patches, it is a new version when it is ready, with a health warning about installing over the old version. You have to buy the browser, or put up with banner adverts, the free updates are only available for the current version, if they bring out V8 tomorrow it is buy time again. Maybe when they bring out V12 things will be okay. Until then, welcome home Internet Explorer and Outlook Express – all is forgiven. So are you, because it's a good magazine, normally...

Leon :-]

So, can we take it from your comments that you don't like Opera then, Leon? To be honest with you, we wanted to show people that there is a viable alternative to Internet Explorer out there, and that you don't have to stick to the software that comes pre-built on your PC. We still like Opera, if only because of its amazing array of keyboard shortcuts.



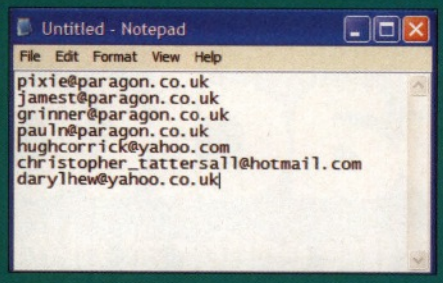
Opera might not be to everyone's taste, but it does offer a good alternative to Internet Explorer

Reader's tip

Safety first

I use Microsoft Outlook Express, but in order to safeguard my retained email addresses, I delete all addresses and keep a record in a separate text file. I then just copy and paste the address when I send. It's just a little more effort but feel I am doing my bit to help protect my contacts.

Terry Butcher



Your letters

Continuing controversy

What is the point of the girl posing in a bikini on the front of *Practical Internet* magazine? She doesn't seem to have anything to do with the content and hasn't even slightly been integrated into any sort of artistic cover! Is the magazine just catering for desperate men?

Well it sure puts me off buying it – I wouldn't want to be seen reading it as people may get the wrong idea looking from far away. Also a picture like this encourages people to use the Internet for looking up porn, ie this cover is presenting users with a sneak preview of what they can find on the Net! I was very annoyed when I saw this in the shop and just had to say something; I realise lots of magazines probably use such a sleazy technique, but this is the one that caught my eye today…

Susy

I for one would like to say that issue 77 had a great front cover, and that it in no way lowered the serious and informative (as always) content of the magazine.

So to all the naysayers, politically correct do-gooders and feminists out there I say – "get a life".

There are more important things going on in the world today than having to worry about a lovely lady on the cover of a magazine.

Andy Faulkner

The controversy over issue 77 shows no signs of abating, although most of you are still of the opinion that a woman in a bikini is a step too far for *Practical Internet*. Andy obviously disagrees, although we have reverted to more traditional *PI* covers recently.

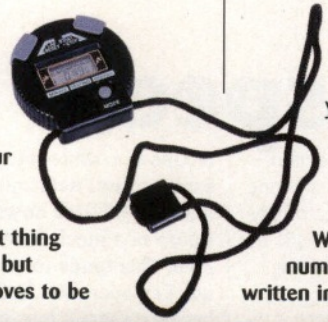
Ricky, don't lose that number

I have been a subscriber to NTL Broadband 500K for over a year now and when I first switched from dial-up I did notice a big difference, but then I felt that it was just as slow at loading Web pages. With this in mind I turned on the Internet Speed Monitor in my Norton System Doctor. It continually tells me the speed is slow, but nowhere can I find out what the speed is or how slow.

I have not noticed any programs mentioned in your fantastic magazine on broadband speed monitors – did I miss it? Or can you recommend one, and, if possible, one that produces a report? I do feel I am paying for a service I am not getting, with no way that I can prove it.

Thank you for a great magazine, which I am pleased to say I have been a subscriber to for over five years and recommend to all that ask me questions about the Web, Net or site-building.

Rick



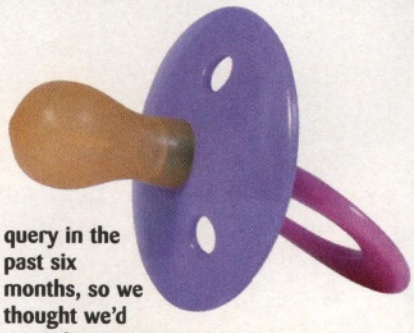
Checking your connection speed should be the easiest thing in the world, but somehow proves to be very difficult to achieve. Thankfully, loads of sites have sprung up that will tell you exactly how fast your connection is moving. One of the most straightforward is available at bandwidthplace.com/speedtest, which does exactly as the name would suggest. Don't ever forget www.pcpitstop.com either, although the Net connection tester was down when we last tried it.

Where's the dummy?

I was consulting a back copy of *PI* [issue 69] tonight, trying to rid all that annoying adware that comes with KaZaA. I was following the steps and the CEXX link is no longer available. On looking around the site it does suggest Registry editing and deleting files but I would prefer to just replace the 'cd_clint.dll' file as the article explains. Do you have a copy of 'cd_clint.dll' from when you guys tried it out that you would be able to email me or something please?

Rob King

We've lost count of the number of readers who've written in with exactly the same query in the past six months, so we thought we'd print the new URL to help everyone out. Basically, the CEXX site changed its URL not long after issue 69 came out, so our link became obsolete. If you want the dummy file, toodle along to www.cexx.org/dummies.htm.



A scam too far

I read with interest your comments in issue 78 of *Practical Internet* on the '419' Nigerian email scam. I don't get that much spam, but I seem to receive at least one email from a kindly Nigerian fellow a day. I'd love to make easy millions, but then again, I'd love these people to leave me alone. What are your thoughts on the matter?

Bill Pipe

We understand how you feel, Bill. Our email account is packed with Nigerians offering to make us a mint – at the last count we had around 20 of them cluttering up our inbox. Can any readers beat this?

Attachment of the month

SOME PEOPLE OBVIOUSLY have far too much time on their hands. This mocked-up picture of a spider-enhanced Scooby Doo must have taken some poor punter hours to create. Still, you've got to be impressed by the dedication. Big thanks to Dave Hacker for sending us the picture, by the way.

Have you picked up a hilarious or strange email attachment? Would you like to share it with your fellow *Practical Internet* readers? Send it to **pi@paragon.co.uk** with the subject header 'Attachment of the month'. We'll print the best one in the mag each month

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FREE WEBSITE FORWARDING	Visitors to your domain name are forwarded to your website (domain remains in the address bar)
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FREE UNLIMITED EXPRESS SUPPORT	Our experts are on hand to help you – by phone, email and live online

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WHICH ISP?

WITH ONE MILLION NOW ABOARD THE BROADBAND BANDWAGON, **ALEX WADDINGTON** EXPLAINS HOW YOU CAN IDENTIFY YOUR IDEAL ISP

According to recent Government figures, over one million UK businesses and consumers have signed up for broadband Internet access. After a large amount of prodding, BT is finally getting its act together and performing the necessary technical upgrades. In the last few months, the trigger levels for hundreds of local telephone exchanges have been reduced, meaning fast and affordable ADSL access will soon become a reality for thousands more offices and households around the country.

It's also noticeable that cable companies are attracting large numbers of subscribers to their high-speed services, while alternative forms of broadband access are becoming more widely available and affordable. In short, the broadband revolution is in full swing and shows no signs of slowing down.

Some of you reading this article will be looking to take your first steps into the world of 'faster than 56Kb' Net access. Others will have already taken the plunge and may be coming to the end of a 12-month contract. Whatever your situation, choosing the right broadband package in today's marketplace is no easy task. Are the cut-price deals as good as the pricier packages? Will any limits be imposed on your usage? Which ISPs offer special features that meet your needs? These are questions you might be asking yourself.

In this feature, we take a close and comprehensive look at the most suitable packages for various different types of Internet user, from the occasional surfer to the insomniac download addict. In each category we highlight the range of services available and point you towards the most appropriate deals.

As we went to press, BT Wholesale announced that it was to cut the amount it charges ISPs to run ADSL services from £14.75 to £13 a month. Check out individual ISP home pages for more details.

"Whatever your situation, choosing the right broadband package in today's bustling and highly competitive marketplace is no easy task"

CATEGORIES OF USER

Obviously we all differ in how we use the Net and the perfect ISP for one person would be a nightmare for another. Here's an explanation of how we divided up our categories so you can easily spot which services are suited to you

LIGHT & MEDIUM USER
A person who occasionally settles down for the odd hour or two during the evening or at the weekend to check their email and browse a few Web sites.

HEAVY USER
Someone who eats, drinks and sleeps the Internet. They are online for several hours every day and love downloading big software, video and music files.

BUSINESS USER
A person who needs the Internet to run their business successfully. A big email user who also browses the Web and perhaps maintains their own Web site.

NON-ADSL ENABLED USER
This is someone who hasn't yet had their local exchange upgraded by BT, or who lives too far away from it to receive an ADSL connection.

FEATURE FREAK & CONTENT JUNKIE
A person looking for added extras, which may meet specific individual requirements, or satisfy a desire for more value.

Light & medium users

TISCALI PRODUCTS
TISCALI BROADBAND
Tiscali offers two great Broadband access packages, including 6 email addresses, 100MB web space, Instant Messaging and unrivalled content.
TISCALI BROADBAND
TISCALI BROADBAND PLUS
SAVE £115!
Up to 5 times faster (256 Kbps)
Up to 10 times faster (512 Kbps)
FREE MODEM
FREE MODEM
PLUS FREE CONNECTION!
£19.99 per month
£27.00 per month

Start off on the broadband road with Tiscali

If you're an infrequent Internet user, there's little point signing up for an all-singing, all-dancing broadband package. You need to think carefully about your needs and then purchase accordingly; there's no point shelling out loads of money for something you're hardly going to use.

Tiscali's Broadband service is a nice introduction to 'faster than 56Kb' access (**www.tiscali.co.uk**). For £19.99 per month you get to experience the Internet at 256Kbps – that's around five times faster than usual. At the time of writing, Tiscali was offering connection for £35 plus VAT and a free modem. Alternatively, you might want to consider NTL's 128K Broadband service (**www.ntlhome.com**), which allows you to download data at 128Kbps – twice the speed of a traditional dial-up connection – and costs just £14.99 per month, plus a £25 connection fee.

DO YOU WANNA GO FASTER?

But while the services mentioned above provide a nice introduction to high-speed Net access, they can't even begin to rival the thrill of 512Kbps broadband. For a few pounds extra a month, you can experience the real thing.

PlusNet's (**www.plus.net**) ADSL Home Surf Self-Install package is one of the tastiest true broadband deals on offer, costing just £19.99 plus the standard £50 plus VAT for connection.

It's one of the cheapest ADSL deals, but there's no file sharing

For a nice boost to your connection speed, visit NTL

In return for your dosh, you can benefit from download speeds of up to 512Kbps and uploads of around 256Kbps. The service works in exactly the same way as more expensive packages, except you can't use file-sharing programs such as Grokster, which allow you to swap video and audio content with other Internet users.

PlusNet says the ban on file sharing is down to the fact the process consumes oodles of bandwidth and affects the quality of service received by other users. By prohibiting the swapping of hefty multimedia files, it is able to keep the price of ADSL access at rock bottom. However, the restriction doesn't affect the downloading of files from Web sites.

NO-FRILLS THRILLS

As *Practical Internet* went to press, Supanet (**www.supanet.co.uk**) had just unveiled its new Broadband Silver package, providing a 256Kbps connection for just £17.99 per month.

STAR BUY

GIO INTERNET ADSL HOME 500
www.giointernet.co.uk
512Kbps / 256Kbs
50:1 contention
£18.99 per month

Gio Internet's been around long enough now to suggest it won't disappear with your dosh. With a three-month minimum contract and no bandwidth restrictions, it's simply the best cut-price package around.

broadband Platinum
£29.99 PER MONTH
broadband Gold
£24.99 PER MONTH
No up-front costs
Free Connection
Free modem - worth £79.99
Use your phone and surf at the same time
10 times faster than a 56k modem
24/7 access
Free connection
Use your phone and surf at the same time
10 times faster than a 56k modem
24/7 access

For a super-cheap broadband deal, give Supanet a shot

Meanwhile, good old BT (**www.bt.com**) had also unveiled a no-frills 512Kbps ADSL service called BT Broadband, which provides high-speed Net access but little else. So there's no email addresses or Web space thrown in, and a daily download limit of 1Gb applies. On top of the standard fee for hooking up to the service, you will be charged £27 a month, which is automatically added to your quarterly telephone bill. For such a basic service, that doesn't sound very good value. However, in recent speed tests conducted by ADSLGuide (**www.adslguide.org.uk**), BT Broadband fared very well, so it could be worth the dosh.

"If you're an infrequent Internet user, there's little point signing up for an all-singing, all-dancing broadband package. Think carefully about your needs and purchase accordingly"

SIGNING ON THE DOTTED LINE

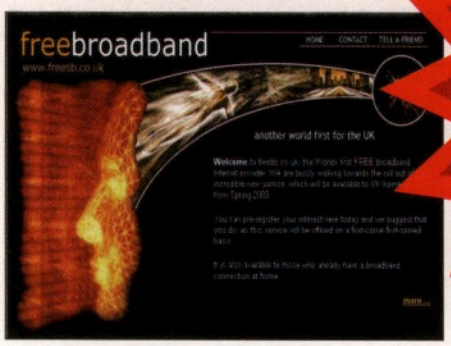
When you sign up for a broadband package, it's important to read the small print carefully. Many companies offer cheap deals but insist you commit for a minimum of 12 months. The danger here is that if the service turns out to be rubbish, you can't switch providers without financial penalty. If you don't want to sign away your freedom of choice, consider PlusNet's (**www.plus.net**) ADSL Home package. It costs £22.99 per month and the minimum contract time is just one month. Also consider ZenADSL Home from Zen Internet (**www.zen.co.uk**) for £2999 per month and ADSL Pure IP from Freedom2surf (**www.freedom2surf.net**), which costs £22.50 per month. Each has a minimum contract period of just one month.

Light & medium users cont...

Occasional Internet users should also consider the cheap and cheerful broadband packages available at the lower end of the market. Although the connections they offer may never get close to the 512Kbps advertised because of the number of subscribers, and the customer service and technical support may not be great, at least it won't leave you feeling skint.

At present, two of the cheapest unrestricted broadband deals on the market come from Gio Internet (**www.giointernet.com**) and fairADSL (**www.fairadsl.co.uk**). Both offer 512Kbps download and 256Kbps upload for a 'cheap as chips' price of £18.99 per month. What's nice about both of these ISPs is they don't attempt to tie you into long contracts, as many of the bigger companies do. Gio Internet only requires you to sign up for a minimum of three months, and throws in seven email addresses and 10Mb of Web space with its ADSL Home 500 package. Likewise, fairADSL has a minimum contract of just three months, so if the Home User package doesn't live up to your expectations, you can switch to another ISP without too much hassle.

We should point out, however, that as we went to press quite a few customers were moaning about terrible download speeds when using file-sharing applications. By the time you read this, fairADSL should have upgraded its network and resolved this problem. But check out the discussion forums of the ISP's site for the latest situation.



Broadband for free? Surely some mistake

GLOBAL LOSS

If you're tempted by the low monthly prices offered by the likes of Gio Internet and fairADSL, remember they are cutting their profit margins to the bone. In recent times ET Global Solutions, which offered 512Kbps ADSL for just £18.95 per month, has gone to the wall and others could follow suit. If you want to try bargain basement services, our advice is to avoid paying large sums of cash upfront. Even if a company seems reputable and established, the broadband battle is going to be bloody and many ISPs will become casualties of the fierce competition.

"If you want to try bargain basement broadband services, our advice is to avoid paying large sums of cash upfront"

STAR BUY

METRONET PAYGO500
www.metronet.co.uk
512Kbps / 256Kbs
50:1 contention
10p per 1Mb (£1763 min monthly charge)

An excellent option for light users who only want to pay for the bandwidth they consume. MetroNet has an excellent reputation for providing fast and reliable connections, so this package gets a big thumbs up.

fairADSL is perfect if you don't want a long-term contract

Some light users may also prefer to try out the UK's first 'pay as you go' broadband service. Instead of shelling out a fixed monthly fee, you are billed every quarter according to the amount of bandwidth you consume. Under MetroNet's (**www.metronet.co.uk**) PayGo500 package, you pay a standard connection fee and 10p per 1Mb. There's a minimum quarterly charge of £45 plus VAT, and once you reach this mark data transfer is charged at just 0.25p per 1Mb.

Finally, if you're curious about broadband but don't want to shell out for the experience, why not pre-register with Free BB (**www.freebb.co.uk**)? The company claims it will soon start offering a no-cost service to UK home users. We wait with baited breath.

BARGAIN BROADBAND DEALS

Name	URL	Monthly fee	Activation fee	Maximum download speed (Kbps)	Contract length	Annual cost
NTL 128Kb Broadband	www.ntlhome.com	£14.99	£25	128	12 months	£204.88
Supanet Broadband Silver	www.supanet.com	£17.99	£49.99	256	12 months	£265.87
Tiscali Broadband	www.tiscali.co.uk	£19.99	£41.13	256	12 months	£281.01
Gio Internet Home 500	www.giointernet.com	£18.99	£58.75	512	3 months	£286.63
fairADSL Home User	www.fairadsl.co.uk	£18.99	£58.75	512	3 months	£286.63
PlusNet ADSL Home Surf	www.plus.net	£19.99	£58.75	512	12 months	£298.63
NTL 600k Broadband	www.ntlhome.com	£24.99	Free	600	12 months	£299.88
V21 Home User	www.v21.co.uk	£19.99	£70.49	512	12 months	£310.37
PlusNet ADSL Home	www.plus.net	£22.99	£58.75	512	12 months	£334.63
Jolt Home500 Lite	www.jolt.co.uk	£22.99	£58.75	512	12 months	£334.63

The heavy user

Power users will love Freedom2surf's offerings

Are you a Net addict that likes to stay online for hours, downloading files like they're going out of fashion? If so, you're going to need a heavyweight broadband package that gives you sizzling speeds and superb reliability.

As you will see from the table below, not all 512Kbps broadband services are the same. In fact, you won't achieve the maximum download speed with any ISP. But some are faster than others. Take Nildram (**www.getadsl.co.uk**) for example, which is renowned for offering nippy uploads and downloads. For a highly competitive fee of £22.99 per month, you can enjoy its speedy Home 500Lite service.

If you've a serious need for speed, have a look at Zen Internet's ZenADSL Home package, which costs £29.99 per month (**www.zenadsl.com**). Also check out Eclipse Internet's (**www.eclipse.net.uk**) ADSL 500 Lite package for £26.74 per month, and the Boltblue Broadband (**www.boltblue.co.uk**) deal for £27.99 per month. Sure, they're a little more expensive than some other ISPs, but the quality of the connection makes them worth it.

If you're after even more speed, consider signing up for an ADSL broadband service with a 20:1 contention ratio. This figure refers to the number of people you could potentially be sharing a 512Kbps connection with. At busy times, an ISP offering standard 50:1 contention can really begin to churn. For something with more zip, try PlusNet's (**www.plus.net**) ADSL Office 500 offering for £64.63 per month, or Andrews and Arnold's (**www.aa.nu**) Home 500 deal for £58.75 per month. Both these packages come with a 20:1 contention ratio.

CRANK IT UP

In recent months a number of affordable 1Mbps broadband services have cropped up, and are ideal for heavy home users. Freedom2surf's (**www.freedom2surf.net**) ADSL Pure IP For Power Users package may be a bit of a mouthful, but it's an absolute steal at £39.99 per month. As long as you live within 3.5km of your local telephone exchange, you can enjoy download speeds of up to 1,024Kbps. In terms of added extras, 20Mb of Web space and 20 email accounts are included. The activation fee is higher than normal at £70.49, but the minimum contract is just two months.

Nildram (**www.getadsl.co.uk**) has recently launched trials of a similar service, which will also cost £39.99 per month when it's launched. The dslXtra 1000 package will offer the same download and upload speeds as the Freedom2surf deal. However, a 150Gb per month download limit will be imposed. As *PI* went to press, Nildram was predicting the new service would be available on 70% of UK broadband-enabled exchanges. The activation fee for the new service will be £64.63, with a minimum contract of 12 months.

STAR BUY

FREEDOM2SURF ADSL PURE IP FOR POWER USERS
www.freedom2surf.net
1024Kbps / 256Kbs
50:1 contention
£39.99 per month

Trailblazing package offering 1Mb downloads for an incredibly low monthly price. Boasts a two-month minimum contract and no transfer limits, making it ideal for heavy downloaders.

THE NEED FOR SPEED

The quickest 512Kb ADSL connections

Rank	ISP	Download speed (Kbps)	Upload speed (Kbps)
1	Nildram	446.3	237.0
2	Eclipse Internet	433.2	235.9
3	Zen Internet	432.4	234.8
4	BT	428.2	231.3
5	Boltblue	426.0	233.3
6	PlusNet	424.3	236.2
7	Pipex	423.9	236.7
8	Demon	419.3	220.5
9	Freedom2surf	415.6	236.0
10	AOL	415.2	228.6

Figures courtesy of ADSLguide (**www.adslguide.org.uk**). Speed tests conducted during February 2003

ONLINE GAMING

Online gaming is set to become massive thanks to broadband. With fast connections now highly affordable and available, kicking multiplayer ass has never been easier.

If you intend to utilise your broadband connection for serious gaming, choose your ISP carefully. You need the fastest data transfer rates possible, the least amount of lag, and lightning-quick ping rates. With this in mind, it's best to avoid the dirt-cheap services, which can be congested and slow. Experienced gamers also suggest you avoid the big service providers with lots of subscribers.

We've only been able to find one specialist gaming ISP in the UK offering broadband access and that's Jolt (**www.jolt.co.uk**). Its £22.99 a month Home500 Lite package is specially configured for gaming, allowing you to participate in Quake bloodbaths without interruption. Keen joystick jugglers may also like to give Blueyonder's (**www.blueyonder.co.uk**) broadband packages a whirl, as the cable provider has an excellent reputation among gaming fans.

With regard to the newly launched Xbox Live (**www.xbox.com/uk**), the service works with most broadband connections except AOL Broadband and satellite packages. However, Microsoft has partnered with Blueyonder, BTOpenworld (**www.btopenworld.com**) and NTL (**www.ntlhome.com**) to make the setup process simpler. Be warned, though, that extra monthly fees and connection charges apply.

Business user

Broadband offers many benefits to small- and medium-sized businesses. Large files can be transferred at high speed, which means less man-hours are wasted through employees sitting around waiting for important emails to download. If you're a very small business with just one telephone line, ADSL broadband allows you to connect to the Internet while keeping the phone free. It's also worth remembering that in a small office, several computers can share the same fast connection.

If your business relies heavily on the Internet for communication, the last thing you need is long periods of unavailability. For this reason, businesses should choose an established ISP with a reputation for delivering a high quality and reliable service. It might be a good idea to speak to your business associates to see if they can recommend anyone.

PIPE DREAMS

Pipex (**www.pipex.co.uk**) is certainly one of the best ISPs around. For £29.36 a month – plus a £70.50 activation charge – you can subscribe to this mega-reliable ISP's Xtreme Home Office package, which offers 512Kbps download, 256Kbps upload and a contention ratio of 50:1. For your money you also get 12 email accounts, 50Mb of Web space, free anti-virus software and free use of the Pipex Websell eCommerce tool. The Xtreme Business 500 package boasts the same features but has a lower 20:1 contention ratio. This package is priced at £76.31 per month with a £70.50 activation fee.

Another highly regarded ISP is Zen Internet (**www.zenadsl.com**), which offers its 512Kbps Office 500 package, with a contention ratio of 20:1, for £70.50 per month. An activation fee of £58.75 applies and there is a minimum contract of one month. As an added bonus, users get 50Mb of Web space and a POP3 email account.

Business users should also examine what Easynet (**www.easynet.net**) has to offer. Its business packages start at £93.99 a month for a 512Kbps service with a contention ratio of 20:1. The activation fee is a hefty £300, due to the fact everything is set up by a BT engineer, who will visit your premises.

Pipex could have your business rocking to the sound of ADSL

VIDEO STARS

If you're keen on videoconferencing, standard broadband packages aren't really going to cut the mustard. Instead, you'll need a package that purrs along at 1Mbps and above. Unfortunately, this type of service isn't cheap.

Pipex offers its Xtreme Business 2000 package for £146.82 per month, plus a £70.50 activation fee. For this you get blistering download speeds of up to 2048Kbps and a contention ratio of 20:1. The only hitch is the maximum upload speed remains pegged at 256Kbps. So while you may be able to receive data quickly, sending it will take much longer.

Zen Internet offers both a 1Mbps and 2Mbps service contended at 20:1, priced at £111.63 and £164.50 per month respectively with a £70.50 activation charge applicable to both. Easynet's 1Mbps service costs £113.63 per month, while the 2Mbps service will set you back £139.83 per month. Each package is contended at 20:1 and carries an activation charge of £300.

THE LEASED OPTION

Before we leave this subject, it's worth mentioning ISDN and leased lines. To receive BT's ISDN 2e service (**www.bt.com/isdn**), which allows data downloads and uploads at 128Kbps, your telephone line needs to be upgraded. This will cost a few hundred pounds and hefty line rental charges will apply.

A leased line is a mega-reliable 'always on' Net connection that allows data to be transferred at unbelievably high speeds. The drawback is the cost; expect to pay several hundred pounds a month for a basic 512Kbps service.

STAR BUY

PIPEX XTREME BUSINESS 2000
www.pipex.co.uk
2048Kbps / 256Kbps
20:1 contention
£146.82 per month

An excellent package that's ideal for businesses with a real need for speed. Lighting-fast, ultra-reliable and backed up by Pipex's legendary support service, it's a clear winner.

Keep it nice and easy with Easynet's services

"If your business relies heavily on the Internet for communication, the last thing you need is long periods of unavailability"

WHAT THE HELL IS SDSL?

The term ADSL stands for Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line, which means the download and upload speeds are different. If you're a home user, the chances are that you can live with a slower upstream. But for small businesses that are keen to exploit technology like videoconferencing, Symmetric Digital Subscriber Line (SDSL) is a mouth-watering prospect.

At present SDSL is very much in its infancy in the UK, due to the fact BT is only just beginning to upgrade significant numbers of exchanges. However, successful trials have taken place of 2Mbps SDSL services – and by the time you read this, the technology should be available in most major cities across the UK.

As we went to press, we came across a small number of ISPs offering SDSL services. However, a 2Mbps symmetrical Net connection will cost something like £300-£400 per month, plus a hefty installation fee. If that hasn't put you off, speak to companies like Easynet (**www.easynet.net**), Mistral (**www.mistral.co.uk**) or Albion Computers (**www.albion.co.uk**). Over the next couple of years, the price of SDSL is likely to drop as more businesses start to realise its benefits. But for the time being, it remains prohibitively pricey.

Non-ADSL enabled user

Unfortunately, not everyone in the UK can hook up to ADSL. Latest figures suggest around 30% of households are either too far away from their local exchange or else BT hasn't got around to carrying out the upgrades.

If your local exchange hasn't been ADSL-enabled yet, pay a visit to the BT Broadband Web site (**www.bt.com/broadband**). The telecommunications giant has set up a scheme that allows people living in non-ADSL areas to log their interest. Exchanges have been assigned 'trigger' levels, and once enough people have registered their desire to get ADSL, the BT engineers will get to work.

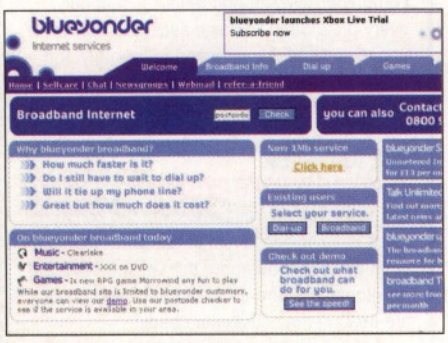
THE CABLE GUYS

However, if it seems unlikely that you'll be getting ADSL anytime soon, there's no need to despair. NTL (**www.ntlhome.com**) offers a range of deals to suit all requirements and pockets. Its cheapest package is 128K Broadband, which costs just £14.99 per month with a £25 connection fee. This service gives you maximum download and upload speeds of 128Kbps and 64Kbps respectively.

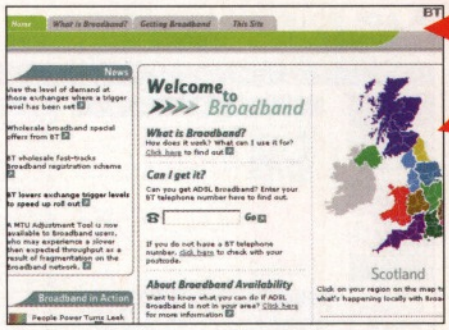
The most powerful package on offer from NTL is 1Mb Broadband, which gives users the ability to download at speeds of up to 1024Kbps and upload at 256Kbps. The premium for this type of speed surfing is £34.99 per month, with free installation.

All NTL broadband packages come with a generous 55Mb of Web space, 15 email accounts and a free cable modem. The only real drawback is the 1Gb per day download limit – anyone going above this on a regular basis will receive a warning from NTL, and could ultimately have their connection terminated.

Telewest is another cable company that could furnish you with a speedy connection. Through its Blueyonder Broadband service (**www.blueyonder.co.uk**), customers can enjoy download speeds of 512Kbps and uploads of 128Kbps for £29.99 per month. Installation, which includes the provision of a cable modem



Head over to blueyonder for a high quality cable service



Got no ADSL? Gather a group and meet BT's trigger levels

and Network Interface Card, costs £75. If you've got a real need for speed, the Blueyonder Broadband 1Mb service offers downloads of 1,024Kbps and uploads of 256Kbps for £39.99 per month, with a £75 installation fee. Both packages come with 30Mb of Web space and five email accounts.

SLEEPING SATELLITE

Over the last year or two, broadband satellite has become much more affordable and possible. Everywhere Broadband's (**www.everywherebroadband.co.uk**) new service promises peak transfer speeds of 1.5Mbps for £19.95 per month. Full installation costs £199.99 and includes a satellite modem, but customers must provide their own dish. If this has whetted your appetite for satellite, we also recommend looking at Norfolk Satellite's (**www.norfolksatellite.co.uk**) Jetstream 512 package. Available to computer users across the UK, it allows up to 500Mb of data to be downloaded every month at speeds of up to 512Kbps. The cost of this one-way access is £36.43 per month. Installation starts at £252.63, but includes all hardware.

CUTTING THE WIRES

Finally, there's wireless broadband to chew over. This technology is still very much in its infancy, but there is one major service available. Liberty Broadband (**www.libertybroadband.co.uk**) has been at the forefront of the development of wireless broadband Internet access in the UK. To make it work, a small box is fitted inside your house and connected to a small antenna on your roof. This communicates with a base station nearby, which is hooked up to a traditional fast broadband connection.

For £46.99 per month, you can expect to experience downloads of up to 512Kbps and uploads of around 256Kbps, with a contention ratio of 30:1. Installation costs £175.08 and you must provide your own Ethernet card and RJ45 crossover cable.

STAR BUY

NTL 600K BROADBAND
www.ntlhome.com
600Kbps / 128Kbps
20:1 contention
£24.99 per month

A great value service for those who can't get ADSL and live in an NTL area. Installation is free, download speeds are high and you even get a free modem chucked in.

UNLIMITED DOWNLOADS VERSUS DATA CAPPING

In February 2003, NTL changed its terms and conditions and introduced a data transfer limit of 1Gb per day for broadband customers. Under the new rules, any user who exceeds the daily data limit for three or more days in any consecutive 14-day period will be asked to moderate their bandwidth use.

We spoke to Paul Hanlon, who's been an NTL broadband user since July 1999 and was appalled when he heard about the daily limit. "My immediate reaction was to cancel all my NTL services with the exception of broadband," Paul told us. "It goes against the whole principle of having a broadband connection.

"The worst-case scenario would be that Broadband Britain is strangled while still in its infancy, due to NTL and other ISPs moving back to a metered usage model."

To address Paul's concerns, we spoke to Bill Goodland, Director of Internet at NTL. "Like all broadband networks, ours is a shared network," he told us. "Unfortunately, there is a tiny minority whose continuous or prolonged data downloading may cause network congestion and affect the enjoyment of others."

Goodland stressed the 1Gb limit was introduced to give customers guidance on what constitutes normal residential network usage. "It's equivalent to downloading 20,000 Web pages or 10,000 pictures per day," he added. "If you occasionally exceed your data limit, it will not be a problem. We will only contact customers who exceed the daily data limit for three or more days in any consecutive 14-day period. I'm sorry if Paul is unhappy about this but we're determined to maintain product quality for the vast majority."

ntl:

Feature freak & content junkie

Many of the broadband packages on offer today are very similar. Priced around the same mark, they offer the same upload and download speeds and the same contention ratios. If you're looking for an ISP that offers something a little bit more than the usual flotsam and jetsam, then we suggest you read on.

Pipex (**www.pipex.co.uk**) throws in some great extras with its Xtreme Solo 500 package, including 12 POP3 email accounts, 50Mb of Web space and eCommerce software. All this plus 512Kbps ADSL access for just £23.44 a month seems pretty peachy to us.

If you're planning on building a particularly large Web site, you may be interested in Tiscali's (**www.tiscali.co.uk**) Broadband Plus deal that provides 100Mb of Web space and six email addresses for £27 per month. We also like the extras Sonnet Internet (**www.sonnetinternet.co.uk**) includes with its ADSL Professional 500 account. Shell out £29.38 a month and you can receive 512Kbps broadband access, a whopping 500 POP3 email accounts, 100Mb of Web space and one free '.co.uk' domain name.

JOIN THE CLUB

For special content and services, take a butcher's hook at Freeserve Broadband package (**www.freeserve.com**). When you sign up to its £27.99 a month service, you receive £25 worth of exclusive goodies, including music downloads, digital photographic prints and text messaging. Once your trial period is up, a regular £4.99 subscription to the Freeserve Music Club will allow you to listen to 500 streaming tracks every month or, alternatively, download five songs to keep.

Enjoy AOL's exclusive content at super-fast broadband speeds

AOL (**www.aol.co.uk**) makes a lot of noise about its special content channels, available exclusively to its £27.99 a month broadband subscribers. Sign up with Connie and company, and you can enjoy exclusive full-length Cartoon Network cartoons and interactive games. Cable provider Blueyonder (**www.blueyonder.co.uk**) serves up similarly exclusive content for its subscribers. Connect to the special portal and you can watch videos, download your favourite music and play games for hours upon end.

THEY'RE EVERYWHERE

When satellite broadband outfit Everywhere Broadband (**www.everywherebroadband.co.uk**) launches later this year, it's promising exclusive streaming video channels. Meanwhile, Europe Online (**www.europeonline.com**) already provides thousands of selected software, film, MP3 and game downloads as part of its 2Mbps satellite broadband deal. If you subscribe for around £16.50 per month, you can also receive hundreds of digital TV and radio satellite channels on your PC.

STREAMING VERSUS DOWNLOADABLE CONTENT

A broadband Internet connection allows you to enjoy masses of video and audio content. However, multimedia is supplied in two different ways on the Internet and it's important to note the difference. Some content is supplied in 'streaming' format and is played through Real One Player and Windows Media Player without actually being saved onto your computer. The advantage of the streaming format is you can see and hear content instantly, without having to wait for a large file to download. The disadvantage is that you can't save it on to your hard drive and play it when you're not online.

The problem with downloadable content is that, even with a broadband connection, it can take ages to transfer onto your hard drive. But once the process is complete, you can then watch or listen to the file at any time. These days, music and video downloads tend to come in MP3 (.mp3) and MPEG (.mpeg) format, and can be played using software like Winamp and Windows Media Player.

If you're looking to get hold of particular music files, your best bet is to use file-sharing services such as Grokster (**www.grokster.com**). But we couldn't possibly condone infringement of copyright, so be careful what you grab.

STAR BUY

FREESERVE BROADBAND
www.freeserve.com
512Kbps / 256Kbps
50:1 contention
£27.99 per month

Fast and reliable Internet access coupled with free access to premium services is the reason this package gets the nod. Download music, send text messages and order prints of your digital snaps – all for zilch!

BROADBAND ISP RESOURCES

ADSLGUIDE
WWW.ADSLGUIDE.ORG.UK
Attractive and colourful site containing stacks of useful information about ADSL broadband. Catch up on the latest news and developments, compare the various packages offered by leading ISPs, and test the speed of your connection.

BROADBAND HELP
WWW.BROADBAND-HELP.COM
Features an excellent article on the various broadband options available. You can also read detailed user reviews of packages and browse a detailed buyers' guide, which highlights things to consider before signing up.

ISPREVIEW
WWW.ISPREVIEW.CO.UK
A great resource that churns out stacks of broadband news and information every day. Also boasts excellent ISP listings, with ADSL, cable, satellite and wireless services split into separate sections.

NET4NOWT
WWW.NET4NOWT.COM
Comprehensive site that details just about every broadband package available. Allows you to sort listings according to monthly and yearly cost, and has some very lively discussion forums.

THE REGISTER
WWW.THEREGISTER.COM
The Register's investigative style and consumer focus is a constant thorn in the side of ISPs. A great place to read about the latest broadband developments and discover which companies are treating their customers badly.

Our Data Centre. Your peace of mind.

Microsoft CERTIFIED Partner

Host Europe

Step 1: Select Operating System

Cobalt RaQ

from £74.99 per month
The original "Web-in-a-box" solution.

RedHat Linux

from £99.99 per month
RedHat Linux is the industry standard for web hosting.

Microsoft Windows

from £199.99 per month
Microsoft Windows, the choice of small and large businesses alike.

Sun Solaris

from £199.99 per month
The market leader for reliability and performance.

Co-location

from £99.99 per month
Your server's safe in our Data Centre.

Step 2: Select Specification

RaQ 128
128 MB/20GB/**5 GB** Data Transfer

RaQ 256
256 MB/20.4GB/**20 GB** Data Transfer

RaQ 512
512 MB/30GB/**30 GB** Data Transfer

RaQ 550 256
256MB/40GB/**20 GB** Data Transfer

RaQ 550 512
512MB/2x80GB/**30 GB** Data Transfer

Entry
Intel Celeron 1Ghz/128MB/40GB/
10 GB Data Transfer

Professional
PIII 1.13Ghz/256MB/60GB/
20 GB Data Transfer

Ultra
PIII 1.266Ghz/512MB/80GB/
30 GB Data Transfer

Ultra II
2xPIII 1.4Ghz/512MB/2x18GB SCSI Hard Disks running RAID 1/
35 GB Data Transfer

Enterprise
2xAMD Athlon 2Ghz/1GB/4x36GB SCSI Hard Disks (RAID 5)/**55 GB** Data Transfer

Enterprise Xeon
2xIntel® Xeon® 2 Ghz/2GB/4x72GB SCSI Hard Disks (RAID5)/**80 GB** Data Transfer

Advance
2xUltra Web Servers/Ultra II Database & Ultra II Mail Server/**100 GB** Data Transfer

Corporate
3xUltra II Web Servers/Ultra Mail Server/ Enterprise Database Server/
250 GB Data Transfer

Corporate Advanced
4xEnterprise Web Servers/Xeon Database Server/Enterprise Mail Server/
400 GB Data Transfer

Sun Fire V100 128
500MHZ/128MB/40GB EIDE/
20 GB Data Transfer

Sun Fire V100 1GB
500MHZ/1GB/2x40GB EIDE/
30 GB Data Transfer

Sun Fire V120 1GB
650MHZ/1GB/36GB U tra SCSI/
40 GB Data Transfer

Sun Enterprise
2x450MHZ/2GB/2x18GB Ultra SCSI/
100 GB Data Transfer

Co-location
Your server's safe and secure in our Data Centre. Choose from a range of data transfer (bandwidth) per month and benefit from 24/7/365 unlimited technical support.

Co-location Pro
Half rack of 20 U's of 19" rack server space/15 100 Mb Switch Ports /15 power sockets/up to 30 IP addresses/
45 GB Data Transfer

Co-location Ultra
Full rack of 40 U's of 19" rack server space/23 100 Mb Switch Ports /23 power sockets/up to 60 IP addresses/
70 GB Data Transfer

Step 3: Select Security

Firewall
only £100 per month

Protect your machine from unwanted visitors. Web based control panel allows you to add rules and deny undesirable visitors.

Backup
Daily - only £120 per month
Weekly - only £60 per month

Running databases, holding customer information or involved in e-commerce? If your answer is "yes" then order backup now and benefit from free restores if required!

Advanced Systems Monitoring
only £30 per month

The ultimate tool for knowing how your server is operating. Pre-empt critical failure and minimise server downtime with messaging via e-mail or SMS.

Plus Package
only £199.99 per month
(Save £600 per year)

Firewall, Daily Backup and Advanced Systems Monitoring bundled to save over £600 per year! The complete solution to your Web hosting security.

Product Focus: Ensim

FREE!

Free Ensim software pre-installed and ready to run on every Linux and Windows server!

This industry-leading, web hosting platform allows our resellers and customers to manage their hosting environment and administer their server with no technical ability. Ownership of the administrative functions and configuration of your own server will delight your customers, maximize performance and minimize costs. Ensim will transform your Dedicated Server into an easy-to-use, web hosting appliance that's ideal for web developers, designers and single site users alike.

ensim

Free with Linux & Windows Servers

Benefit From

Same Day Setup

Call us and place your order via credit card or direct debit before 4:00 p.m. (Monday-Friday) and we'll have your server up and running on the same day!

State of the art Data Centres

Our UK Data Centres are designed, owned and managed by us. Situated in London and Nottingham, they benefit from the latest security, backup, power and climate control features available.

Customer Charter

Dedicated Servers are committed to providing you with the highest levels of customer service. Covering all aspects of the customer relationship, it's your assurance of world class service.

Current Specials

Internetworks Free Subscription for 6 months!

Dedicated Servers have teamed up with one of UK's leading Internet magazines, Internet Works, to bring you a great offer. Purchase any dedicated server from our range and receive a free six months subscription.

Pre-Pay Bonus Pack

A huge bonus if you take out any dedicated server with a value of £2000 or more and pay for the year in advance. Each pack includes 5 leading books on your chosen operating system, that will help you get the most out of your dedicated server; as well as great Host Europe merchandise.

Step 4: Relax with...

FREE AND UNLIMITED Technical Support

Unlike most of our competitors we do not charge for technical support or aftersales service. Available with every Dedicated Servers product, you can call or e-mail our support team on an unlimited basis, 24/7/365.

Service Level Agreement

Standard SLA:
Our Industry leading SLA is your guarantee of a totally reliable service. We'll pay you if it's not! Benefit from 99.9% connectivity, 30 minute reboot guarantee, 1:1 contention ratio on bandwidth and a price freeze-forever!

Advanced SLA:
Specially tailored for Enterprise level services and above, the Advanced SLA is perfect for mission critical sites. Backed by a money back guarantee, benefit from 99.999% connectivity, two hour hardware resolution, 30 minute reboot guarantee, 1:1 content on ratio on bandwidth, a price freeze and a personal Account Manager.

Step 5: Contact Us

t: **0870 333 0877**

e: **sales@dedicated-servers.co.uk**

w: **www.dedicated-servers.co.uk**

We constantly monitor the competition and know we offer the best value, feature-for-feature dedicated hosting in Europe. We are after all, the generic name associated with scalable, secure hosting. We will beat any like for like quote ..try us!

MasterCard VISA VISA Electron DELTA DIRECT Debit

Our Data Centre. Your peace of mind.

Dedicated Servers

Prices exclude VAT @ 17.5% and setup where applicable. All trademarks acknowledged. E&OE

BAG A BARGAIN HOLIDAY

WITH A MASS OF HOLIDAY DEALS TO BE HAD ON THE NET, **DARREN LOCK** SHOWS HOW YOU CAN GET AWAY FROM IT ALL AND HAVE ENOUGH MONEY LEFT TO BUY YOUR BUCKET AND SPADE

In the bad old days (before the Internet), as soon as the Christmas period had passed, everyone would buckle down and start preparing for the following summer's holiday. Along with the weekly ritual of seeing what holiday ideas Judith Chalmers and her posse of C-list celebrities had to offer, wannabe holidaymakers looking for the best deal would have to suffer a slew of television commercials from holiday companies peddling their wares.

Thankfully the Internet came along to completely revolutionise the way people book their holidays. Gone are the days of trudging down to the local travel agents in the rain and returning with a redwood forest-worth of brochures. The difficult decisions of planning a break can now be made in the comfort of your own home with only the mouse and monitor as your guide.

The main reason people use the Internet to book and plan their holidays is the fact that many of the deals on the Net are much cheaper than the offers being made by your local friendly high street travel agent. In fact, you can usually expect to save at least 30% by using the Web. The question is, how do they manage to do it? How do the online travel agents keep their prices down?

Well, the answer is fairly simple. You have to remember that, like many Internet retailers, Web-based travel agents don't have to pay to keep a nationwide network of shops open; and they also have a fraction of the staffing costs to boot. And because many of the deals can be booked at the last minute, they are kept at a low, attractive price, which is all the better for us. So, read on and prepare to enter a world where holidays are cheap, and where you can book anything you like in seconds.

Booking a cheap flight

If you plan to go anywhere outside the UK, your first step is to book a flight. Things have changed a lot since the early days of air travel and there are many bargains to be had if you want to fly away somewhere nice. Try and book early to get some good worldwide flight deals, or take advantage of the budget airlines that have sprung up in the past few years to fly to Europe.

Cheapflights (**www.cheapflights.co.uk**) offers flights to over 600 locations around the world and is a perfectly good place to start looking for a flight. The site itself serves both long haul and UK domestic flights so if you can't find your destination on Cheapflights, it's doubtful you will find it anywhere else. Expedia (**www.expedia.co.uk**) was originally set up by Microsoft and provides flights to all major destinations, allowing the user to pre-book any car hire, too. Expedia is also a member of ATOL and IATA.

eBookers (**www.ebookers.com**) is one of the cheaper Web sites in the travel game and provides intercontinental and UK domestic flights, though the site can sometimes be a bit confusing to use when booking a package deal.

Get up in the air for less with Cheapflights

The flights on eBookers are protected by ATOL and the company is also bonded with ABTA, IATA, PATA and ASTA. The Deckchair Web site isn't much to look at but it is a member of ABTA and IATA (**www.deckchair.com**).

If you are planning your holiday at the last minute, you might want to visit the aptly-named Lastminute.com (**www.lastminute.com**) for its late-breaking deals. This site also suggests places to visit if you are looking for a spontaneous getaway break, something that the other sites don't offer. Again, Lastminute.com is a member of ATOL and IATA.

Budget airlines

Of course, you can also book your flights directly from the airline company. Top of the list is easyJet (**www.easyjet.co.uk**), which provides flights to most European destinations, while Ryanair (**www.ryanair.co.uk**), Buzz (**www.buzzaway.co.uk**), and Virgin Express (**www.virgin-express.com**) all cover roughly the same European geographical area.

If you are looking to go further afield, all the major airlines can be booked from the sites we've mentioned earlier, but you can still book direct from Virgin Atlantic (**www.virgin-atlantic.com**), KLM (**www.klm.com**) and British Airways (**www.britishairways.co.uk**). For more information about booking a flight, visit UK Flights Guide (**www.ukflightsguide.co.uk**).

So what kind of money can you expect to save? We searched for the cheapest single ticket return to Rome in July and found that Ryanair offered the best deal. For £51, you could be enjoying a bowl of pasta and a cup of espresso in no time at all. Ryanair's offer was £80 cheaper than booking the cheapest flight with Thomas Cook (**www.thomascook.com**) and on average £60 cheaper than booking from any of the other Web sites mentioned so far. However, these flights are often oversubscribed and you don't always end up at the airport you expect – remember, you tend to get what you pay for!

"Things have changed a lot since the early days of air travel and there are many bargains to be had if you want to fly away somewhere nice"

Getting to and from the airport

Before you can jet off on your holiday, you need to actually get to the airport. Many people tend to overlook this crucial part of the holiday preparations and rush around at the last minute. Depending on your location, you can pre-book a coach via the National Express site (**www.nationalexpress.com**) or pick up your rail tickets from Trainline (**www.thetrainline.com**). If you are looking to book a taxi to get you to the airport, check out Cheap Taxi (**www.cheap-taxi.co.uk**), which provides details of various Internet-enabled taxi firms that provide airport transfers. In terms of savings, there's not much of a margin involved when it comes to booking taxis online, though you can pick up some savings from National Express and Trainline when they run special promotions.

Ryanair is one company you can rely on for topnotch deals

Book your taxi to the airport before you set off with Cheap Taxi

TOP 10 FLIGHT DEALS

ROME
Return flight from London Stansted to Rome Ciampino – £45.42
Ryanair (www.ryanair.co.uk)

BARCELONA
Return flight from London Gatwick to Barcelona – £70
Easyjet (www.easyjet.co.uk)

SYDNEY
Return flight from London Gatwick to Sydney – £469
Cheap Flights (www.cheapflights.co.uk)

NEW YORK
Return flight from London to New York – £128
British Airways (www.britishairways.com)

RUSSIA
Return flight from London to Moscow – £186
Expedia (www.expedia.co.uk/)

HONG KONG
Return flight from London to Hong Kong – £502
Virgin Atlantic (www.virgin-atlantic.com)

SOUTH AFRICA
Return flight to Johannesburg – £405
Lastminute (www.lastminute.com)

RIO DE JANEIRO
Return flight from London to Rio – £469
Lastminute (www.lastminute.com)

SHANGHAI
Return flight from London to Shanghai – £350
Expedia (www.expedia.co.uk)

INDIA
Return flight from London to Delhi – £394
eBookers (www.ebookers.com)

Booking your hotel

So you've got your flight, you've booked your taxi to the airport, but wait a minute; you've got nowhere to sleep when you get there! Of course, it's unlikely that this will happen, because you can also use the Internet to book your hotel accommodation. Many of the Web sites we've already mentioned allow you to book your hotel room at the same time as organising your flights, so you can easily create your own package deal.

If you are looking for a quick package deal, Lastminute.com is the place to go, and has a good range of city break weekends to choose from. It often works out a lot cheaper to book your flight and room at the same time from Lastminute, and this is a pattern that is repeated across many of the big names. Anyone looking for a longer holiday will find no end of tempting offers at eBookers, which seems to have a wider and cheaper range of hotels and flights compared to its nearest rivals.

There are also a number of sites that just specialise in hotel accommodation. Cheaprooms (**www.cheaprooms.com**) is one such site and although it is very US-centric, there are many destinations available and a good range of prices to choose from.

Use Explore Worldwide to inject a bit of adventure in your life

and privately owned hotels/B&Bs charge more if you stay during the week and are cheaper at the weekends, to take advantage of passing businessmen. This rule is reversed in places like Las Vegas, as the town comes alive at the weekends, so the bargain room rates are found during the week.

Looking for adventure?

But why settle for a boring, conventional holiday when there are so many places to explore and so many things to do? If you are up for an adventure, check out Explore World Wide (**www.exploreworldwide.com**), which provides a raft of worldwide adventures that are only a click of the mouse away. Also in the market for specialist holidays is Exodus (**www.exodus.co.uk**), which can take you to any continent on the planet, and let you trek, hike and climb your way to adventure.

If you like playing games in the snow, there are many skiing holiday specialists online, too. Check out Skiline (**www.skiline.co.uk**) which will get you on the white stuff in the US, Canada and Europe or Mark Warner (**www.markwarner.co.uk**), which also offers some late skiing, bargains.

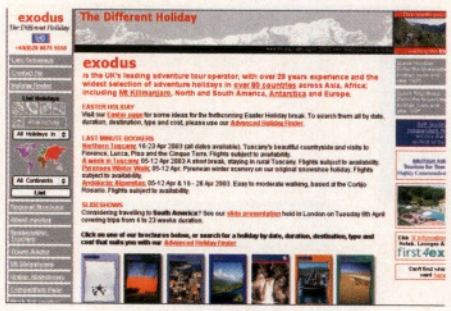
"If you travel out of season, not only do you avoid all those families with disruptive children, you can also save some serious cash"

For those looking for a break a little closer to home, check out All UK Hotels (**www.allukhotels.com**), which provides details of accommodation all over the British Isles, and if you fancy roughing it, try UK Parks (**www.ukparks.com**) – a site dedicated to the ancient art of camping.

Timing is everything

You can also save a bit of cash depending on when in the year you book. Of course, if you travel out of season, not only do you avoid all those families with disruptive children, you can also save some serious cash. Also, some hotels

Find a cheap place to lay your head at this helpful site



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Skiline will have you on the piste in no time at all

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Take a cruise on a deluxe ship as it winds its way along the Ayeyarwady River on its way to Mandalay. This spectacular trip lasts up to seven nights and all flights/transfers are included.
£3,010 per person
eBookers (www.ebookers.com)

ROUND THE WORLD

If you are going to travel, you might as well go around the world. This trip takes you from London to Bangkok to Perth to San Francisco to Las Vegas to New York and back to London.
£5,429 per person (travelling first class)
eBookers (www.ebookers.com)

KINGDOM OF THE INCAS

If you thought the only interesting thing to come from darkest Peru was Paddington Bear, you'd be wrong. Take a trip back in time and marvel at the wonder of the ancient Inca civilisation. And don't forget your cheque book.
£2,599 per person
Ancient World Tours (www.ancient.co.uk)

SEVEN NIGHT LAND AND SEA VACATION

Tell your friends that you went on a Mickey Mouse cruise. Not a cheap package bought from some backstreet Arthur Daley, but a genuine bona fide cruise organised by the Walt Disney organisation. If you really give a Donald Duck, go first class, but don't get Goofy on us when you get the bill.
$5,000 (approx. £3,000) per person
Disney Cruise (disneycruise.disney.go.com)

ONE GIANT LEAP

For those who are feeling jaded with commercial air travel and are looking to break through the final frontier, what about going into space? If you've got more money than a Russian cosmonaut, you could be the next Yuri Gagarin if you get in touch with these guys.
Prices start from $5,500 for orbital flight training, but you could end up blowing millions by the time you blast off
Atlas Aerospace (www.atlasaerospace.net)

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The extras

While most package deals provide a shuttle service to and from your hotel, you could be left high and dry if a car doesn't come as part of the deal. One of the benefits of booking your car hire online is you don't have to worry about any awkward language barriers, and your car will be ready and waiting for you when you touch down. Expedia gives you the chance to arrange car hire when you book your flight, but you might also want to check out some of the specialist car hire organisations. Hertz (**www.hertz.co.uk**) and Avis (**www.avis.co.uk**) have most worldwide locations covered, while Europcar (**www.europcar.co.uk**) specialises in European car hire.

Insuring yourself

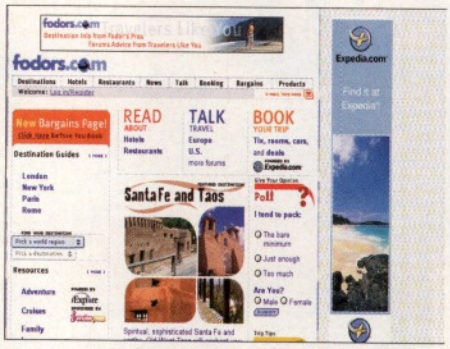
In this day and age, only a fool would travel without sufficient insurance. If you get ill or get hurt (skiers and snowboarders take note) you could end up facing a big medical bill if you aren't covered. Many of the online sites offer travel insurance as part of the package, but you can get a cheaper deal if you shop around. One of the cheapest places around for holiday insurance is Columbus Direct (**www.columbusdirect.net**), while Travel Insurance Direct (**www.travelcover.co.uk**) specialises in skiing and adventure holiday cover. If you are a student or planning on doing some backpacking around the world, give Leading Edge (**www.leadedge.co.uk**) a try.

Wherever you end up, let Avis help you get from A to B

Online travel guides

Before you head off on your journey (or even before you start to plan it) it is always good to do some research and gather insider knowledge of where to go, where to avoid and what the locals are like. In the past, you would have had to visit the local library or spend your hard earned cash on a stack of travel guides. Those days are long gone as you can now do all your research from the comfort of your home, using a few well-chosen Web sites. World Travel Guide (**www.worldtravelguide.net**) gives you the lowdown on many locations around the world. From weather to local attractions, you'll find it on this site.

Those looking for reviews of hotels and restaurants should try Fodors (**www.fodors.com**), which also features many mini-guides to popular locations, though it tends to concentrate on the US.



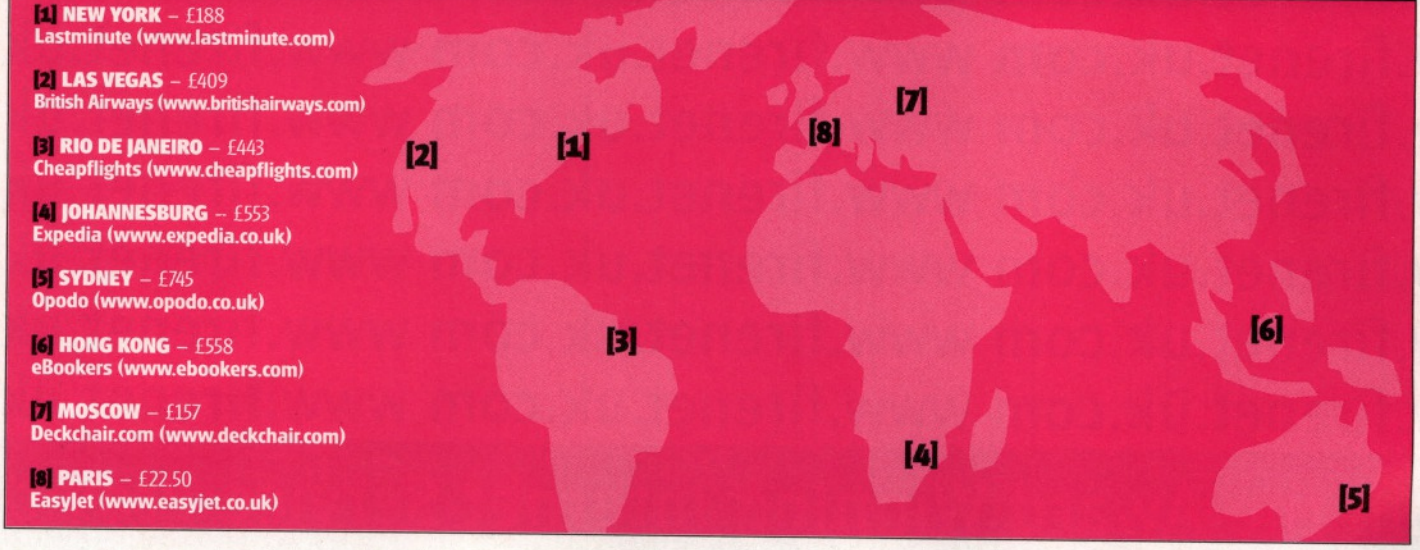
There's tons of reviews and advice on the Fodors site

Of course, many paper-based guides have made a successful transition to the Internet. Two of the most popular are Lonely Planet (**www.lonelyplanet.com**) and Rough Guides (**www.roughguides.com**), both of which are packed with useful information.

"Before you head off on your journey (or even before you start to plan it) it is always good to do some research and gather insider knowledge"

Most of these sites provide maps to print out and keep for reference, but if you are looking for a particular map, there are plenty of dedicated sites to help. Pay a visit to Mapquest (**www.mapquest.com**), MultiMap (**www.multimap.com**) or Maporama (**www.maporama.com**). Most of these sites allow you to download maps straight to your PDA, which could prove useful and will save you from looking like a tourist! ■

AROUND THE WORLD IN EIGHT SITES



[1] NEW YORK – £188
Lastminute (www.lastminute.com)

[2] LAS VEGAS – £409
British Airways (www.britishairways.com)

[3] RIO DE JANEIRO – £443
Cheapflights (www.cheapflights.com)

[4] JOHANNESBURG – £553
Expedia (www.expedia.co.uk)

[5] SYDNEY – £745
Opodo (www.opodo.co.uk)

[6] HONG KONG – £558
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[7] MOSCOW – £157
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[8] PARIS – £22.50
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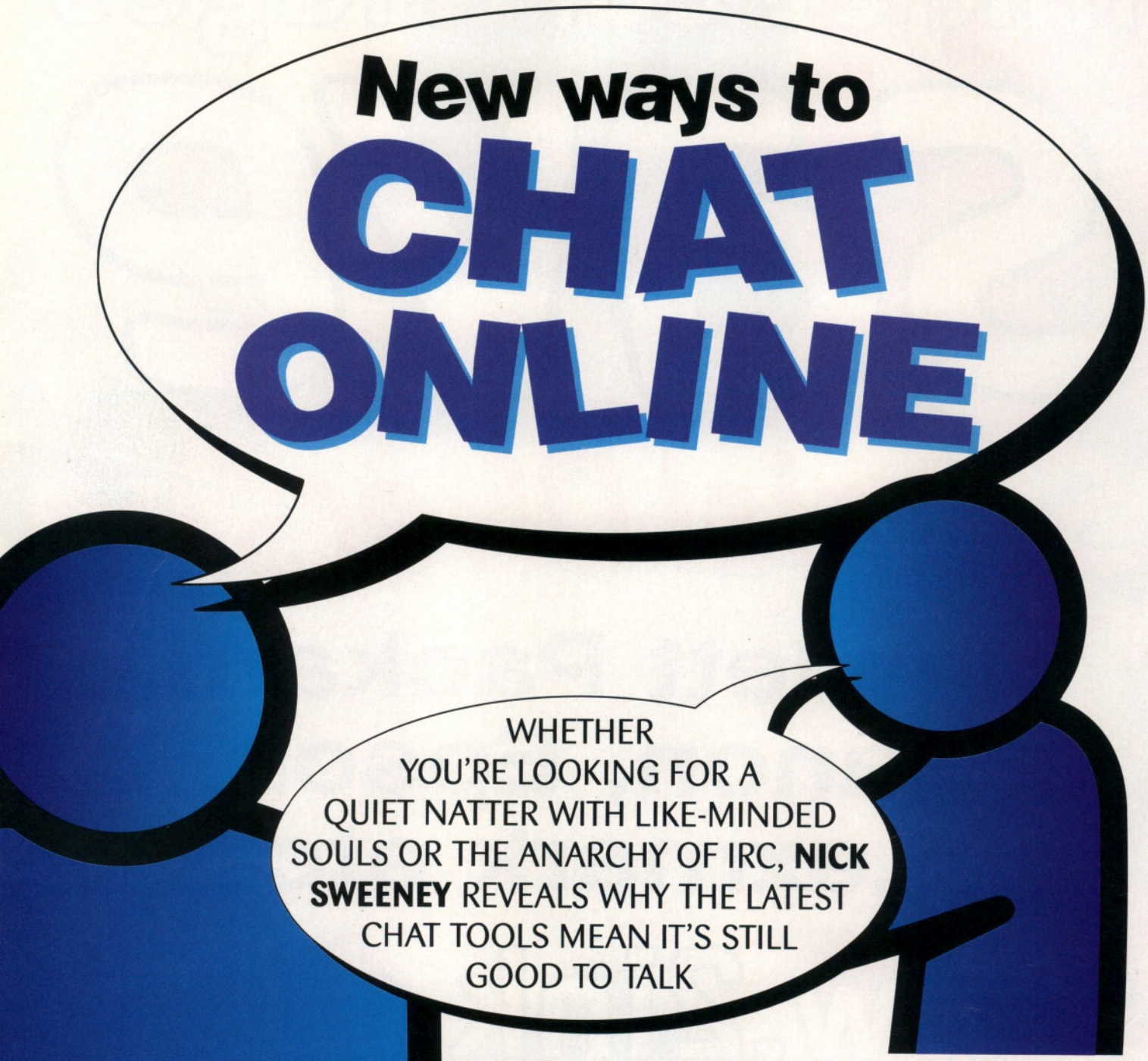
New ways to CHAT ONLINE



WHETHER YOU'RE LOOKING FOR A QUIET NATTER WITH LIKE-MINDED SOULS OR THE ANARCHY OF IRC, **NICK SWEENEY** REVEALS WHY THE LATEST CHAT TOOLS MEAN IT'S STILL GOOD TO TALK

When Liam Gallagher sang 'I'm free to be whatever I want', he missed one key fact: he can't pretend not to be a monobrowed Mancunian hellraiser. That is, unless he chooses to spend time in online chat rooms, where he's free to play at being a blonde bombshell from Birkenhead or a nuclear physicist from Nuneaton. Or even to be himself: which, beyond the much-hyped talk of role-playing, is what most online chatterboxes do best of all.

Internet chat remains one of the oldest, most popular and least-heralded activities in the online world. In part, that's because the media don't care to admit that people actually enjoy having conversations with strangers when they go online. More seriously, it's because the phrase 'chat room' has become inextricably linked with the menace of paedophilia and other criminal activities. It's undeniable that online chat has an image problem and a disturbing underside: but for the vast majority of users, it's harmless fun. Whether it's the one-on-one of instant messaging, the group conversation of online conferencing, or the free-for-all of public chat rooms, there's an appetite for conversation on any topic you can care to think of. So, if you pine for the days of being able to chinwag in the bus queue, or simply have something you want to get off your chest in the company of a digital audience, you're spoilt for choice in the sites and software that make this possible.

INSTANT MESSAGING AND CHAT

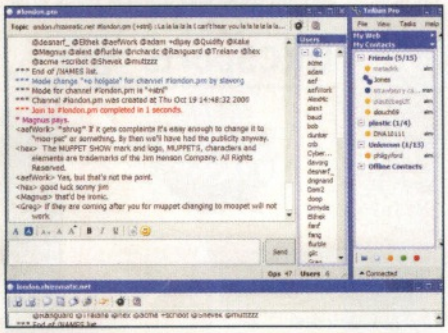
Internet chat may have been around about half a decade before instant messaging, but if you want to get talking online in real-time, your instant messaging client is the best place to start. While most people naturally see IM as a means of holding one-to-one chats, all the leading programs also let you set up multi-person conversations and interface with group chat rooms.

The granddaddy of all instant messengers, ICQ **(www.icq.com)**, has often been criticised for its bloated feature set but while newer upstarts threaten its crown, millions of users still regard ICQ as the original and best. The program contains a number of chat and chat-related features: you can conduct IM conversations within a chat-style single-window interface; turn a one-on-one conversation into a group discussion by inviting more users; use your ICQ client (or just your ICQ number) to create or join group chat rooms; send SMS messages, and hold voice and video conversations. And if all that's not enough, you can also use ICQ, or any IRC client, as an interface to the icq.com IRC server.

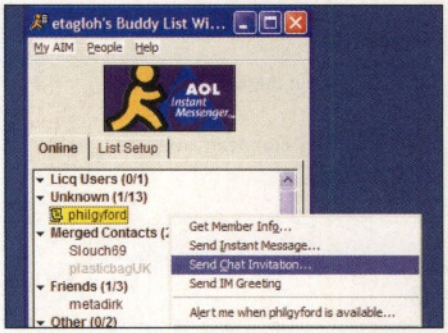
"While newer upstarts threaten its crown, millions of users still regard ICQ as the best"

Private party

Interface-wise, AOL Instant Messenger (aka AIM) is the Plain Jane of the IM domain, but it has the advantage of being able to hook up with the vast array of AOL chat rooms, as well as allowing you to create your own private chat area in which to invite your friends. You can also conduct one-on-one voice conversations that have decent sound quality, even with just a dial-up connection, as long as the person at the other end is using the same software. The latest version of AIM is also compatible with the ICQ protocol – about time too, since AOL owns ICQ! – which gives ICQ users an smaller, faster alternative to their current program.



Keep a finger in all the IM pies with Trillian



Net users who have embraced the AOL community will love AIM's ability to link up with other AOL aficionados in the chat rooms

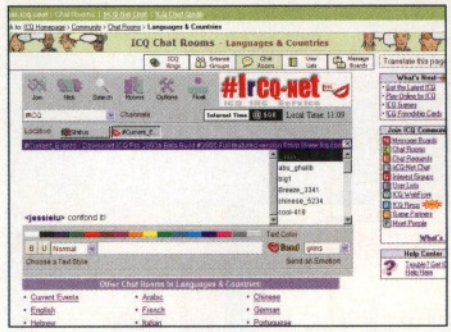
Yahoo! Messenger **(messenger.yahoo.com)** is especially popular with younger users, partly because it encourages the use of smileys, rich text formatting and other emoticons through its interface. It allows one-on-one conversations, hooks up to the wide range of Yahoo! chat rooms, and allows messages to be sent to members of your buddy list, even when they're offline. The IM client also lets you run a Webcam through the Yahoo! site, and hold voice-based conference calls over the Internet protocol: both features that are unique to Yahoo!'s messaging service.

Chatting with MSN

Like AIM and Yahoo!, MSN Messenger **(messenger.msn.com)** hooks into the chat rooms available on the various regional MSN sites. It's not as seamless as AIM, since the client just launches a Web page powered by the Chat ActiveX control.

Windows Messenger, its XP-only cousin, doesn't have this direct link to Internet chat, but it's strong on rich media, with emphasis upon voice and video conversation, file sharing, shared access to remotely-run applications, and a collaborative 'whiteboard' working space.

Last but certainly not least, the Trillian client **(www.trillian.cc)** has grown especially popular among IM and chat devotees in the past couple of years, for one simple reason: by handling all the major IM protocols, it allows you to combine your contacts and buddies in one window, with no need to run three or four programs simultaneously. You don't get the entire range of functionality that comes from running dedicated IM clients for each protocol, but there are more than enough features to keep you going, including an IRC client thrown in for good measure. The freeware Trillian client is well worth checking out – and if you like what you see, consider shelling out for the subscription-based Trillian Pro.



Instant messaging stalwart ICQ is still managing to woo new users

Geek speak

CHAT ROOMS, ESPECIALLY long-standing ones such as IRC channels, often have their own lingo, designed to reduce the lag of typed-in conversations and make them closer to real-time interactions. Some of the terms and abbreviations can be puzzling to new users, so here's a brief introduction…

SIGNING IN/OUT
The more traditional term for what most people call 'logging on and off' to a chat room

IDLE
When you're signed in, but not participating in the conversation

A/S/L
(Age/sex/location) – the way to introduce yourself in general terms to the rest of the chat room

IRL
(In real life) that is, in the world outside the chat room

TY
Thank you

NP
No problem (this is the standard response to 'TY')

BTW
By the way

LOL
(Laughing out loud) – something you read online made you laugh at your monitor screen

LMAO
(Laughing my a*** off) – something even funnier

ROFL OR ROTFL
(Rolling on [the] floor laughing) – something has made you laugh harder still

AFK
(Away from keyboard) – a sign that you're about to go idle

BRB
(Be right back) – this is said when you're just going away from your computer for a few minutes

BBL
(Be back later) – said when you're signing off for a while, or leaving yourself signed in and idle

IMHO
(In my humble opinion) – standard disclaimer for putting forward opinions

RTFM
(Read the flippin' manual! [or variants on that theme]) – tends to be the usual response to simple technical questions

NEWBIE
The classic name for new arrivals to a chat room or channel

LAMER, LUSER
Standard terms of abuse for inept or netiquette-challenged users

L33T
(Elite) – the classic example of 'hax0r sp33k', the argot of the hacker community on IRC

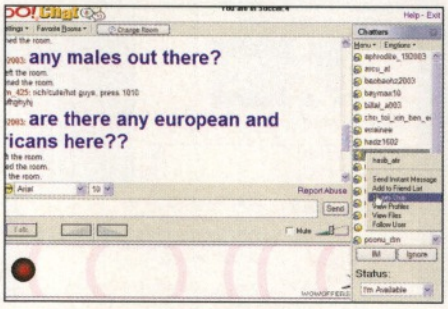
OPS
The 'operators' who control access to IRC channels. If they like the look of you, they can give you 'op status'

CHAT SITES

While instant messaging clients are great for real-time conversations with other individuals, and even for discussions among small groups of friends, they're generally less useful at providing the interest-driven conversation or lively debate of Web-based chat services. You'll find that most ISPs and portal sites offer dedicated Web-based chat, such as AOL, Lycos (**chat.lycos.co.uk**), or Yahoo! (**chat.yahoo.com**). If your own service provider doesn't offer a community that suits your interests, you're free to set one up, or look elsewhere for a well-established forum. There are also plenty of sites dedicated to providing chat rooms, such as UKChat (**www.ukchat.com**), JustChat (**www.justchat.co.uk**) and SpinChat (**www.spinchat.com**), and these sites often have a wider and more diverse range of topics and features than ISP and portal-based chat.

Enter a room

Some chat services such as AOL's rely upon standalone messenger clients. Others, such as



Java applets gives Yahoo! Chat its functionality

Yahoo! Chat, use embedded Java applets or ActiveX controls to provide all the functionality you need to start chatting. In both cases, once you've picked a chat room to join, you'll see the same basic setup: a main window to show the ongoing conversation, a list of the current participants, and an input window for you to type your wit and wisdom so that it can be shared with others. You can add smileys, change the formatting (sparingly, though – large red text is a bit like shouting), send private messages to specific users, and choose to ignore anyone who's particularly annoying. (This may make things a little disjointed if you're ignoring someone who's hogging the conversation, but at least you're spared the blather.) If you want a bit more than plain old text for your chat experience, you can always try what's known as 'avatar chat' at sites such as The Palace (**www.thepalace.com**) and Habbo Hotel (**www.habbohotel.com**), which let you create an animated character that inhabits a virtual world, interacting with other characters and rearranging the furniture.

Enter the avatar world, such as the Habbo Hotel

Mind your language

For many people, one of the most attractive features of Web-based chat rooms is that many of them offer automatic filters that can detect and replace obscenity, and alert site maintainers to problems. The best sites also provide human moderation: staff or volunteers who 'police' conversations for obscenity and abuse. You'll usually find moderation guidelines for each chat room, describing just what sort of behaviour is allowed, and this is especially valuable for children's chat rooms, where they allow parents a greater degree of confidence against the risk of predatory activity.

Finally, there's a wide range of specialised chat rooms, run out of individual sites rather than portals, which often provide more stable and knowledgeable communities in which to participate, and are especially good at using chat

UKChat
UKCSports
Chat Rooms
Message Boards
Come into the Sports room daily for sporty chat. Its open 24 hours a day! Better still, post a message on the boards!
Latest Sports News
Football

It's chat rooms a-go-go at UK Chat

The most obscure chat rooms

"There are hundreds of specialised chat rooms dedicated to every conceivable interest"

Aquarists Reunited (www.aquaristsreunited.fslife.co.uk)
Includes a chat room designed to bring together 'fishy' friends from aquarium clubs that are no longer running. No jokes about it 'tanking', please!

RCChat (www.rconline.com)
For those who think *Robot Wars* is sensationalist rubbish, RCChat offers a Java chat room for discussion and advice on everything that's remote and controlled.

MomStreet (www.momstreet.com)
This maternal chat room has been set up for mothers for all ages, whether it's to compare the DIY skills of 'hubby' or discuss why your kids keep wetting the bed.

Moonlitmagick Pagan Chat (www.moonlitmagickparadise.com)
If your interest in Wicca goes beyond having Buffy and Willow as your desktop wallpaper, this chat facility may leave you literally spellbound.

Blake's 7 Chat (groups.msn.com/Blakes7)
Do you pine for the days when plywood sets were the order of the day? At the Blake's 7 chat room, you too can discuss just how silly it was to name a lead character 'Avon'.

Buddhist Chat (#buddhism on EFNet IRC)
Can enlightenment be achieved over Internet chat? The people who frequent #buddhism think provides random inspiration in the form of a daily scripture. Ommm…

The Whimsical World of Pocket Dragons (www.jarrod.gow.btinternet.co.uk/chatroom.htm)
There are plenty of pocket dragon collectors, but only one chat room to talk about how they've taken over your mantlepiece.

Latin chat room (www.cirlapa.org/locutorium.htm)
While you may think Latin is dead, the 'locutorium' at the 'Circulus Latinus Panormitanus' site proves otherwise. 'Romanes Eunt Domus', anyone?

MOST POPULAR TOPICS of chat room conversation

1. Dating and singles
2. MP3s
3. Politics
4. Terrorism
5. Harry Potter
6. Depression
7. Travel
8. General Health
9. Sport
10. Lord of the Rings

AOL won't disappoint users with its range of chat rooms

Find a cartoon version of yourself at thePalace.com

facilities to provide support and advice. These are especially strong for ethnic minority groups, such as BlackChat (**www.blackchat.co.uk**) and UKAsian (**www.ukasian.co.uk**), and for the gay and lesbian community (such as **uk.gay.com** and **www.gayyouthuk.co.uk**). There are also hundreds of specialised chat rooms dedicated to every conceivable interest and affiliation, usually hosted or linked from sites covering those interests. The lack of a dedicated chat room search engine can sometimes make the best communities hard to find, but you'll usually come up with something if you enter the subject that interests you into Google along with 'chat': you're likely to find the most well-established sites and channels linked in the Google Directory as well as the regular Web Search.

I want my IRC

The first true Net-based chat protocol, Internet Relay Chat (usually known as IRC) may be older than the Web, but nowadays it's a bit like an online iceberg. Most Net users are only vaguely aware of its existence, and even those who are tend to see just a tiny proportion of the activity which goes on. In some ways, that's a good thing: the underwater bit can be pretty murky indeed, and clandestine IRC servers have been linked to everything from file-sharing and piracy to child pornography. In general, though, IRC remains attractive to power users with a geeky streak, who can cope with the arcane list of commands and borderline anarchy that sometimes affects the networks.

> **"Gone are the days of jerky voices that sound like Stephen Hawking with a sore throat"**

Choosing a network

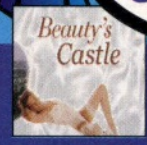
The basic principle behind IRC is fairly simple: you use a client program such as mIRC (**www.mirc.co.uk**) or the built-in chat programs in Trillian or Mozilla, to sign into a server with a nickname (or 'nick'), which then presents you with a list of channels to join, and may allow you to create your own channel. A channel is basically the same as a chat room: most are moderated by 'operators' ('ops' for short) and many offer interactions with 'bots' that are programmed to respond with particular information. The power of IRC comes from its capacity to link up a number of servers around the world into a single network, so you can log into the server closest to you, rather than having to cope with a laggy connection to one based on the other side of the planet. The main networks, such as DALnet, EFNet and Undernet, are generally stable, mostly friendly, able to cope with higher numbers than Web-based chat rooms, and have many well-established channels: again, you're likely to find the names of channels that suit your interests by running a Web search including the term 'IRC'.

HI-TECH CHAT

The original Internet chat program ran on monochrome UNIX terminals: a split screen, with your words at the top, and your conversation partner's at the bottom. It worked – barely. Since everything you typed appeared on the other person's screen immediately, changing your mind in mid-sentence could be pretty embarrassing. Thank goodness, then, for more sophisticated IM and chat programs, and for new technologies that compensate for dodgy typing.

The wider availability of broadband connectivity allows features such as voice and video conversations to be more than just fluff on the interface of your favourite IM client. Gone, for the most part, are the days of jerky pixellated images and voices that sound like Stephen Hawking with a sore throat. In fact, given that many PC owners now have broadband connections, headsets and Webcams, it's a pity that they're not generally aware of the videoconferencing capacity at their fingertips.

Celebrity chataholics



WHILE WE'VE MENTIONED that role-playing is only part of the attraction of Internet chat, it's particularly useful if you want to escape a well-established public persona. Take comedian Johnny Vegas, who used his appearance on *Room 101* to confess a long-standing addiction to Beauty's Castle (**www.beautyscastle.com**) – a long-running fantasy-themed adult chat community moderated by 'lords' and 'ladies' in which users play vampires, wolves and fairy princesses.

Johnny's TV confession went some way to challenge the usual stereotyping of chat rooms as the domain of lonely saddo. With its own virtual pub, dungeon (knowing wink) and even a turret where you can go for a virtual sulk, Beauty's Castle, like many similar chat sites, cultivates a small, close-knit community which makes it easy to develop friendships, and spend hours online honing your virtual identity in a way that's not so dissimilar to the characters we play in real-life social situations. Still, he wanted it putting in Room 101, because its addictive qualities (and the need to stay up late to meet people in American time-zones) were threatening his own day-to-day friendships. Johnny's own site (**www.johnnyvegas.co.uk**) promises its own chat room in the near future.

Raise your voice

'Voice Over IP' – the technical term for using an Internet connection to make voice calls to regular phones rather than through computer interfaces – has been 'coming soon' for almost half a decade. Service providers such as Dialpad have risen and fallen with the Internet boom and bust, and the majority of VoIP users are in the business community, but it's conceivable that since the main cable companies in the UK provide both landline phone contracts and broadband Internet access, they'll be looking to consolidate their services so that phone calls go over the Internet protocol.

Voice chats in Windows Messenger are perfect for tired typists

We're already familiar with the mobile incarnation of instant messaging: it's SMS, and we've taken to it like ducks to water. (If only the Americans were so enthusiastic about it!) Now, with the growth of PDAs with Wi-Fi networking, the latest range of smart phones offering multimedia messaging, and the long-awaited 3G services finally available, we're likely to see personal interaction on the move go beyond a hastily-texted 'C U L8R'. Some of the leading IM clients already have versions available for the Palm and Pocket PC, and ICQ also provides a bridge between its protocol and SMS. At the moment, these conversations are still basically one-to-one, but expect to see chat room-style messaging, especially once the 3G service is up to speed. Finally, it's only a matter of time, we'd suggest, until phones come with text-to-speech processors, meaning that you'll be able to dictate a message and have it converted to text, or type a message and have it spoken back to you.

CHAT ROOM RULES

While one of the attractive elements of Internet chat is its open-ended, slightly anarchic character, this doesn't mean that anything goes. You'll find that a number of rules of thumb go a long way when logging into chat rooms, and that they fall into three main categories: how to avoid being rude; how to stay safe from harm; and how to keep within the law.

Netiquette is the easiest place to start, since you basically stick to the same guidelines that you'd use for any online conversation, whether by IM or email. Always try to be friendly. Don't pick fights or arguments and antagonise other users. Don't SHOUT, try not to use bad language, and make the most of your chat program's ability to block annoying users. If you're looking for specific information, check to see if there's a FAQ for the chat room or channel: moderators or IRC 'ops' can sometimes be short-tempered when it comes to dealing with people asking the same questions over and over again. Don't be afraid to report people who are abusing the chat facilities to the site moderators – they have the ability to ban access to the Internet addresses of persistent offenders, and will alert the authorities to any suspected criminal activity. The laws on 'cyberstalking' vary from place to place, but in general, abusive behaviour can be prosecuted under existing laws on harassment.

Some chat services offer themed rooms, like this nautical example from Lycos

Breaking the law

Online safety is a serious matter: while the media tends to overstate the risk to both children and adults from sexual predation in chat rooms, there's no doubt that a problem does exist from those willing to exploit people's natural desire to tell others about their lives. If your children want to participate in chat rooms, guide them towards sites that are specifically tailored towards children, well-staffed and tightly-moderated, such as those offered by AOL.

Finally, Internet chat raises a few legal issues that are similar to those of file-sharing clients (after all, Napster started life as a hacked-up IRC client). The chat facilities of instant messaging programs allow users to transfer files directly between each other, while IRC in particular is full of channels designed solely for the unauthorised download of MP3s, software and other copyrighted material. We don't need to reiterate that you share files at your own risk: it's usually a breach of your ISP's terms and conditions, and they'll be within their rights to pull the plug on your account. Much safer, we'd say, to stick to regular conversation! ■

Spinchat offers the perfect excuse to install a chat feature on your home page

Secret diary

THE SECRET DIARY OF A CHAT ADDICT (AGED 24¾)

3pm: Wake up, log on to #general-chat. Why is it that Californians go to bed so late?

3:30pm: Stuck in the middle of a heated conversation between five New Yorkers about baseball. I mention that the cricket season over here is just starting. No-one seems to pay much attention.

5pm: Someone called 'nastyboy' gets annoyed because I tell him that he ought to be in #everquest-dating and not #everquest-strategy-talk. I get the ops to boot him. A small victory for netiquette!

8pm: Finally remember to eat something. Cold pizza is a delicacy, you know.

10pm: Bored because none of the regulars are around. Decide to sign into a singles chat room and pretend to be a lonely housewife from Tennessee. Run into trouble when someone who's really from Tennessee asks me about my favourite bars. Make my excuses and leave.

2am: Still no sign of the regulars, but they promised to be here by now!

3am: Yay! sandiego_girl has signed in. I ask her about her day. "Oh, just went shopping with friends ;)" she says. "I have to go out now."

6am: Dragged into a long discussion of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Annoyed, because the Americans give away the plot of all the new episodes that haven't been shown over here. Spoiler! Spoiler!

8am: The west-coasters are logging off, and my eyelids are drooping. And so to bed, dreaming of scrolling pages of text, ROTFLs and LOLs and IMHOs…

Chattily ever after

"We're likely to see personal interaction on the move go beyond a hastily-texted 'C U L8R'"

IMHO, YOU'RE A LIFE-SAVER
A 34-year-old Belgian man entered an online chat room in March 2002, asking how many pills it would take to kill himself. Alarmed users sounded the alert in other chat rooms, and a group of strangers rushed to piece together the depressed man's identity. They tipped off police, who found the man in his home, unconscious but still alive.

CHATTEZ-VOUS FRANCAIS?
In the remote French-speaking regions of Canada's New Brunswick province, it's always been tough for new arrivals to brush up their language skills because formal classes are so thin on the ground. The small town of Saint-Francois has changed all that, though, with a special chat room in which people can practice their French. Formidable!

CHATTING TO BEAT THE HABIT
A chat room created by the local council in Kingston-upon-Thames provides confidential advice and community support for young people dealing with drug problems. The 'Finding out the Facts' initiative, targetting the region's growing crack problem, allows Internet chat users to speak anonymously to drug experts and each other in real-time.

LOVE, MARRIAGE AND… PULLED PIGTAILS?
Brian was an overworked research chemist forced to work all-nighters in Bristol. Fiona was an artist, living on an island off the Canadian coast. They met online through Sissyfight, an avatar-based community where users take the role of schoolgirls in playground battles, and their conversations spread to IM and email. Two years later, they're married.

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† Monthly fee, must be paid annually and excludes one-off setup fee of £9.99. All prices exclude VAT. E&OE

The sickest sites on the Web

KIEREN MCCARTHY TAKES A DEEP BREATH AND PEERS INTO THE NET'S TOILET BOWL TO PICK OUT THE FOULEST SITES AROUND

Mutilation, murder, weird sex, self-abuse – these are the things that form the darker side of human nature. And the Internet being what it is, they are all extensively catered for. If something indescribably horrible has happened, chances are someone has taken a picture of it and someone else has posted it on to a Web site. Likewise anything that can be persuaded to come out of the human body.

It is ironic that the most common argument for justifying extreme behaviour is that we as humans are the most developed species on the planet and so are able to mentally push the boundaries of experience. Almost without exception, the people that stick to this line of thinking have developed intense and precise cravings for the basest kind of behaviour.

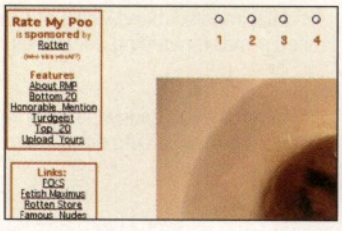
Why anyone would become sexually aroused by someone vomiting on them is not something most of us would like to answer. But of course, another human instinct is curiosity. If someone is doing something abnormal, we want to know why and often the sense of the wrong is itself exciting.

Something that is 'sick', however, tends to capture that no-man's land between what society is comfortable with and what society punishes. It is these sites we have covered. Each is fascinating in its own way and you will no doubt be intrigued to taking a peek, and just as likely, you will be quickly satisfied that it's not for you. And then you seek to tell others about it.

We are a complicated and frequently stupid race, easily bored and always in pursuit of life-enhancing experiences. Hopefully none of these sites will appeal but if they do, please don't tell us about it!

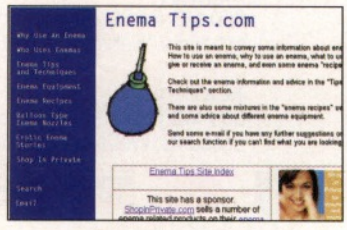
1 Rate My Poo
www.ratemypoo.com

The scatological version of the much-copied Am I Hot or Not? site where people post pictures of themselves or friends and Internet users get to give them a mark out of ten. Except, as you may have guessed from the name, in this case you get to vote on the quality of someone's anal artwork. As with all the best sick sites there is an equal measure of repulsion and fascination. The hundreds of shots of full toilet bowls are not nice viewing but you will be amazed at the wide variety of products that the human bowel can produce.



2 Enema Tips
www.enematips.com

Not a site that immediately strikes you as being sick but look behind the calming blue exterior and you'll find a whole world that would fit neatly into a *League of Gentlemen* episode. An enema is a tube you stick up your anus to clean out your bowels. You may have heard about people doing it for dubious health benefits. However, Enema Tips gives "a reminder of their treatment as a youth" and "a form of punishment" as the top two reasons. And so the site shares what, how, why and where to do it including tips on cleaning up afterwards.

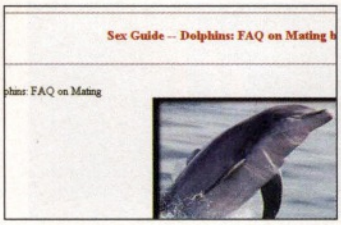


3 The Freak
homepage.ntlworld.com/the.freak

This is a kind of museum to the human freaks that history has thrown up. Lots of old photographs, most of them black and white, demonstrating the weird and the wonderful. Well, the weird anyway. You won't get any explanation or history of the people featured, but then all you really want is to check out the pics and go 'uurrgggh', so it doesn't matter. The site is usefully split into sections: Tall & Small, Fat & Thin, Hairy People, Pinheads, Animal People, Deformed etc etc. The thumbnail pics are terrible but the real ones are, well, horrible.

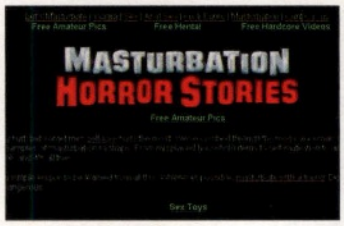
4 Dolphin Sex Guide
www.dolphinsex.org

Ever watched *Flipper* and started pondering how you could have sex with a dolphin? Of course, this sounds like a joke written by someone with a good imagination. If only that were true. Our anonymous guide certainly knows his beans and, rather touchingly, has great affection for the dolphins. "I love them dearly, and treat them with the same respect that an honest husband would have for his wife and children". Oooookay. If you follow the guidelines, with luck, you could be having sex with a dolphin in just three days.



5 Masturbation Horror Stories
www.masturbationhorror.com

You can guess what this is about. Yes, tales of ill-fated onanism gathered from across the world, dating back nearly 30 years and usefully split into Vacuum Disaster, Women in Trouble, Injury and Death, and Reader's Stories. It is in turn fascinating, hilarious and disturbing although far from encyclopaedic – where, for example, is Michael Hutchence? The lengths some people will go to for a bit of self-pleasure have to be marvelled at, but just you try to look at the pic of what can happen when the vaccum cleaner trick doesn't pay off without groaning. A tribute to horny stupidity.



6 ULTRA SICK SITE!

Sideshow Dementia
www.sideshow-dementia.com

This must surely be one of the most extensive picture resources on the Web for sick and twisted subject matter. Click on Picture Gallery and there are a reported 1,249 images in 70 different categories. For anyone wishing to see something that they have probably never seen before with the added bonus of feeling unwell and/or disturbed, then this is the place for you. Some of the pictures are just horrible but they've all happened and they tend to be matter-of-fact rather than pornographic in the wider sense. Ever wondered what someone being beheaded by a Japanese sword looks like? Pop along to Executions. What about a close-up of an aborted foetus… in a toilet? Not sick enough? Then have a look about the comprehensive compendium of accidents – everything from crushed motorists to mangled limbs. You can't fail to be sickened by the nastier side of life here.

> "You won't get any explanation or history of the people featured, but then all you really want is to check out the pics and go 'uurrgggh'"

Fluffy Sites

Rate my kitten
ratemykitten.com
Ahhhh. Vote how lovely my snuggly wuggly lumpkins is for me. Isn't he adorable? Oh look! Look at that gorgeous kitten. I'd love to give him a big hugsy-wugsy.

Love this site
www.lovethissite.com
Everything is fine and nice. Just listen to that music. There's lots of good clean fun to be had here, so forget about that horrid world and be lovely and nice for a while.

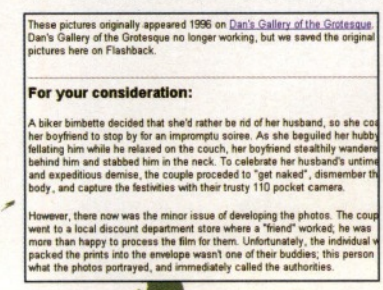
Teddy Bears on the Net
www.tbonnet.com
What's better than teddy bears? Reading about teddy bears, talking about teddy bears and looking at pictures of teddy bears, that's what.

Oriland – origama galore
www.oriland.com/index.asp
Unwind and relieve that pressure by doing some origami. Have a look around Oriland – never has the Japanese art been so pastel and lovely.

Mari-Chan
www.marichan.com
Relax a little with these Pokémon-style original characters from Japanese art student Mari-chan. Hang on, is that a cute little knife in her hand?

7 Flashback – Dan's Gallery of the Grotesque
www.flashback.org/snuff

This really is disturbing. An American woman persuaded her boyfriend to kill her husband. This he did by stabbing him in the neck while she was distracting him downstairs, so to speak. Murder achieved, they then decided to strip naked and pose with the dead man. They dismembered him, sawed off his head and made comedy poses with his finger up his nose. How do we know all this happened? Because they captured the whole thing on their camera. It was the film that eventually saw them given a 30-year life sentence and the film that is available on this site.


These pictures originally appeared 1996 on Dan's Gallery of the Grotesque. Dan's Gallery of the Grotesque no longer working, but we saved the original pictures here on Flashback.

For your consideration:

A biker bimbette decided that she'd rather be rid of her husband, so she co her boyfriend to stop by for an impromptu soiree. As she beguiled her hubb fellating him while he relaxed on the couch, her boyfriend stealthily wandere behind him and stabbed him in the neck. To celebrate her husband's untim and expeditious demise, the couple proceeded to "get naked", dismember th body, and capture the festivities with their trusty 110 pocket camera.

However, there now was the minor issue of developing the photos. The coup went to a local discount department store where a "friend" worked; he was more than happy to process the film for them. Unfortunately, the individual w packed the prints into the envelope wasn't one of their buddies; this person what the photos portrayed, and immediately called the authorities.

8 Atlas of Congenital Anomalies of the External Genitalia

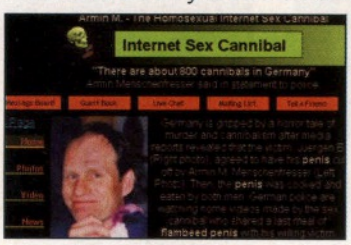
www.atlasperovic.com

There's no reason why a sick site has to be put together by a deranged individual. This example is a serious site, put together by two doctors as a sales pitch for a medical book on congenital anomalies of, well, genitals. We all know that men's and women's organs differ but what happens when it all goes wrong? There's not much more than pictures and a brief explanation but that is all you'll need or want. Question: Is a double penis good or bad?

11 Armin M – The Homosexual Internet Sex Cannibal

arminm.com

Okay, you may need to sit down for this one. Armin M Menschenfresser was arrested in December 2002 by German police after videotaping himself eating compatriot Juergen B. What makes the story all the more sick is that Juergen had agreed to being killed and eaten after he replied to an ad on the Internet. In fact, one video shows the two sharing a last meal together – of Juergen's penis. This site documents the case in great detail.

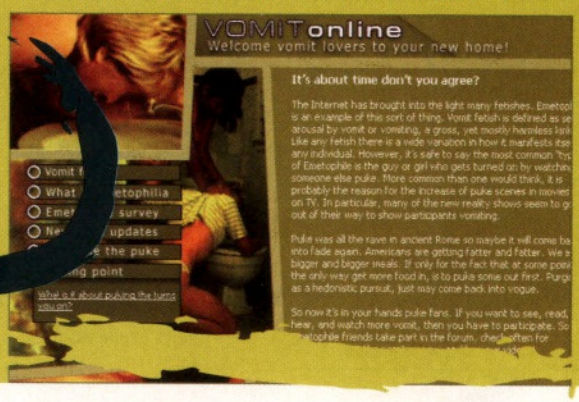


12 ULTRA SICK SITE!

Vomit Online

www.vomitonline.com

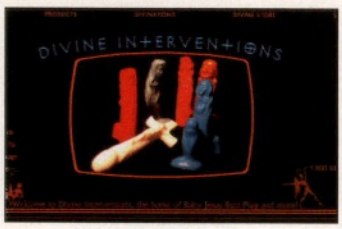
No matter how foul a bodily function, you can guarantee that someone somewhere will get aroused by it. In fact, there are many sites that picture people vomiting. Some are intended to be humorous, others pornographic – but Vomit Online wins the carrot chunks award for pure sickness. It even has a name for it – emetophilia – defined as arousal by vomit. This is a serious site with an expensive monthly subscription but there is more than enough free samples to give you a flavour. Vomit Online reckons that 'purging' may become fashionable soon as a hedonistic pursuit. It's enough to make you puke.



9 Divine Interventions

www.divine-interventions.com

"Welcome to Divine Interventions – the home of the Baby Jesus butt plug." Well, you can't really argue with that. It's harder to know which is the more sick – the company producing a variety of sex toys inspired by Christianity or the people that buy them. But then when it comes to depravity, sex is the undisputed king of motives. Whether it's Judas, Jesus, Mary or Moses, there is an orifice exciter for you. It's not all anti-Christian however – Buddha makes an appearance too. A treasure trove for fallen Catholics.



13 Rob's Necrophilia Fantasy

burknet.com/robsfantasy

Rob is "an average guy", he tells us. He is 50, although he still has his hair, he is married, has three kids and owns his own PC business. He was in the military, he's an intelligent man with hobbies, he has a degree, he lives in the suburbs of a big city and he wants to screw dead people. He's really serious about it. And he explains it all very calmly, rationally and eloquently. In huge, huge detail. And puts up some pics with women posing as corpses. It's all perfectly normal. Not it's not. Rob – you're a freak! Jesus!

10 Odd Beauty

oddbeauty.com

Okay, you've seen the film *Crash*, right? Well, this site is one of many that caters for those that can't get enough of amputees. It seems to be a male heterosexual thing because the vast majority of pics are of women. And most are also just normal pictures of women that happen to have only one arm or half a leg. But produce a site gathering all these pics together, then separate them up into the universally accepted categories of DBK (double below knees), SAE (single above elbow) etc and you have one sick, sick puppy.

14 Suicide Bomber Game

www.newgrounds.com/portal/view.php?id=50323

If pictures of freaks and confessions of maniacs is getting you down, here is a jolly game to raise the spirits. Yes, it's the suicide bomber game. The aim of the game is simple: move about using the mouse then click to explode. The man will take a little delay to open his jacket and detonate the bomb so you have to judge it right if you are to rack up as many kills as possible. Sick, yes. But how many of you will soon become irritated that the gameplay isn't as smooth as it should be?

"What makes the story even more sick is that Juergen had agreed to be killed and eaten after he replied to an ad on the Net"

15 ULTRA SICK SITE!

Zeta Creations

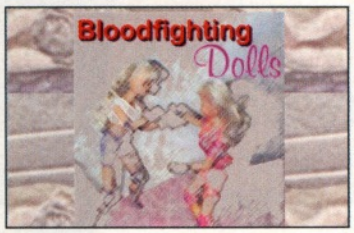
www.zoofur.com

It's something that most people have pondered at some point: what do animals' penises look like and can I buy a reproduction of one off the Internet with which to satisfy myself, once I have figured out how the hell I'm supposed to use it? And that is precisely why Zoofur was set up. Among the other sick sites we've looked at is one about how to have sex with dolphins and one that has dildos in the shape of leading Christian figures: this amalgamates both by offering a wide variety of dildos based on animals – including the dolphin, but also the dog, bear, raccoon, wolf, lion, kangaroo and more. They vary in price from $40 up to around $100 and some of them are extremely odd. In fact, you have to question whether they could really be used as intended. If that isn't sick enough for you, why not pay the Zoophilia section a visit?

16 Bloodfighting Dolls

www.geocities.com/colosseum/bench/9751/bfb-homepage.htm

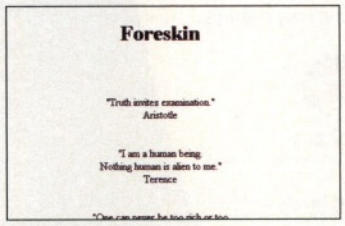
What on earth could be sick about pictures of Barbie dolls in fighting poses? A fair question and one that makes this site owner's twisted genius all the more disturbing. It's possible that by acting out weird, violent and graphic female violence scenarios, these pictures have saved the world from another psycho-sexual serial killer. The dolls on the site don't just beat each other up, but annihilate one another and have the blood to prove it. Remarkably realistic considering and definitely disturbing.



17 Foreskin

www.foreskin.org

What do you mean you haven't always wanted to know everything there is to know about the foreskin? This site is serious about the subject and the crusade to photograph and discuss every aspect of the male foreskin. It is hard to tell when interest in a subject extends from healthy, to obsessive, to weird and finally ends up in the realm of sick. In this case, it can be pinpointed to the section on smegma. "The animal kingdom would probably cease to exist without smegma." Get us out of here!



18 Menstrual Hut

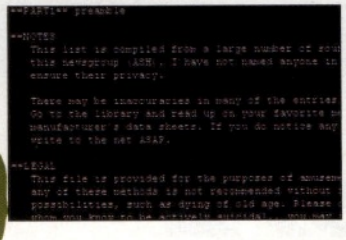
hut.rox.com

"Hi, I edited all these pages. I'm a man, and as we all know, men don't menstruate. But menstruation is a fact of life. My participation in this project has been a real eye-opener." Not as much an eye-opener as it is for the rest of us. While removing the taboos and falsehoods that surround humans' natural functions is to be applauded, gathering used panty liners, photographing them and sticking them on the Net is just weird and sick. But that's only the start and you are led on a journey into the sick mind of a man who needs a psychiatrist – fast.

19 Rahul's Death Page

www.ed.brocku.ca/~rahul/misc/suicide_methods.html

This is the one the tabloids love... sorry, hate. An extensive guide on how to kill yourself. The document is "provided for the purposes of amusement", although you're unlikely to get many belly laughs by explaining how to end your life by injecting petrol in your lungs. There are 38 methods outlined, each with extensive information. Is it illegal? Rahul explains: "Distribution to a number of unknown people is fine, but giving it to someone you know is actively considering suicide can get you into jail for up to 14 years". Now you know.



Become a Web sicko

So you want to join the ranks and build a site which you would be proud to call your own – unless of course the police or your friends and family ask you about it. Simple:

- Don't eat or sleep but drink Tequila for 48 hours. Write down all insane ideas that come to you.
- When you have recovered, read the list again and tick those that most disturb you. Email the list to friends claiming to have found them on a weird site.
- Take on board comments and pick the worst subject.
- Stay up until 6am researching chosen subject on the Internet. Fill your brain.
- Once you have blacked out twice, try to write down everything you have learnt. Don't worry about form, just get it all down. Then email the URL to the owners of sick sites asking for advice.
- You are on the way to fame and fortune and, with luck, the nut house.

20 Freck's New Feet

www.cutoffmyfeet.com

If you're the sort of person that would give their right arm to watch someone hack off their own feet with a homemade guillotine, Frek's plight is worth studying. The 33-year-old suffered a freak boating accident in 1986 which left him with multiple injuries, including complete loss of feeling in his feet. Unable to afford the pioneering surgery he needs, Freck and his mate Kev hit upon the idea of charging Internet users to watch him saw off his plates of meat. Personally, we hope, the guys from *Comic Relief* can step in at the eleventh hour to fund the op, so we don't have to watch. ■

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Microsoft Windows Server 2003

redhat

Home account at a glance

Website
Your website is hosted on our unique ***envisage*** Shared Hosting Architecture. With ***envisage***, your site is hosted by multiple web-servers ensuring it is super-fast and always available. ***envisage*** is a technology, developed in-house, in partnership with Microsoft. It is only available from Fasthosts and offers the most reliable platform for website hosting.

Web Builder
Our Web Builder allows you to create an attractive and compelling website. Choose from thousands of templates and designs and then simply point and click to create your site. Web Builder creates stunning websites in minutes with no technical knowledge required!

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PI300

THE DESIGN PRINCIPLES THAT MADE LOONEY TUNES A WINNER – PAGE 48

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO BUILD STUNNING SITES

Webmaster

■ IN-DEPTH FEATURES ■ STEP-BY-STEP WORKSHOPS ■ HAND-CODING MASTERCLASS

WELCOME...

IT'S A COMMON problem – you want to create your own page, but don't have reams of text and content to justify spending too long on it. The result is usually that you end up with a poor quality site that impresses no-one. It doesn't have to be like that, though. We show you how a little bit of Flash MX trickery can create the kind of sites that will make people want to visit time and again.

If this is too much effort for you, give the template-based NetObjects Fusion 4 a butcher's. I promise that it'll have you designing pages within minutes, and nobody will ever know that you had to do so little work.

Thomas Watson, Editor

What's inside...

48 How did they do that?
We talk to the people at Loony Tunes to find out about their cartoon site

50 Dynamic Web sites
Let us introduce you to the world of dynamic Web design

52 Create a dazzling site
You don't need tons of content to make dazzling pages – just Flash MX

58 Build a site the easy way
Get yourself a fantastic Web presence with the help of NetObjects Fusion

62 Create an online quiz
It's easy to give your site an interactive edge with the help of Opus Pro

66 Structure page design
Ditch the tables, and create a page based on columns

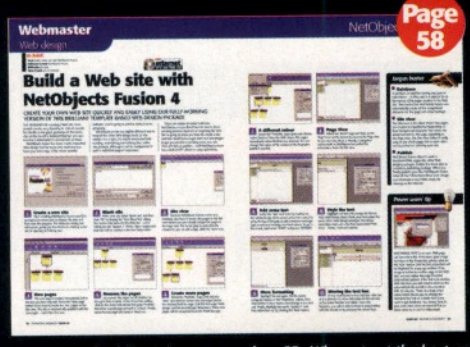
68 Create a catalogue
Learn how to create your own product catalogue using PHP and MySQL

70 Web design Q&A
Ease your design dilemmas with our very own rising star of stage and screen – James Seabright

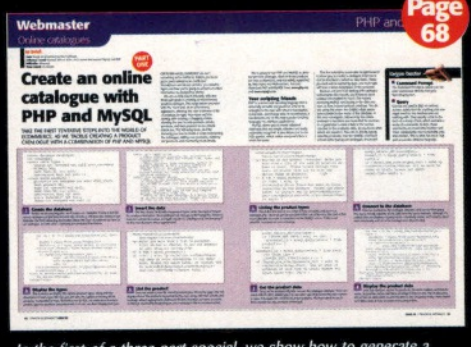
Flash MX

CREATE A STUNNING PERSONAL WEB SITE IN UNDER AN HOUR USING NO MORE THAN A LITTLE FLASH MX EXPERTISE. SEE PAGE 52

Also in Webmaster this issue...



You've got the full version on your free CD. Why not get the best out of NetObjects Fusion 4 with our comprehensive walkthrough?



In the first of a three-part special, we show how to generate a product catalogue entirely out of PHP and MySQL

How we built... LooneyTunes.co.uk

JAMES THORNTON FINDS OUT HOW BUGS, DAFFY, TWEETY PIE AND CO HAVE MANAGED TO ATTRACT A NEW GENERATION OF ONLINE FOLLOWERS

The Looney Tunes crew have been busy bringing a smile to the faces of kids and grown-ups alike for several generations now.

The cartoons, which have spawned countless timeless catchphrases such as 'What's up doc?', 'Thhhuvering Thhhhucatash' and 'I tawt I taw a tooty tat', started life way back in 1930 when two ex-Disney animators got together to release an eight-minute musical adventure called *Sinkin' in the Bathtub*. A series of toons, starring the characters Bosko and Honey, were then commissioned by Warner Bros, who used them to showcase songs from its vast music library (hence the names Looney Tunes and Merry Melodies). As the years ticked by, animation techniques improved and new characters such as Bugs Bunny, Porky Pig and Foghorn Leghorn began tickling the ribs of viewers.

Until very recently, the exposure of Looney Tunes was on the decline, with the characters restricted to outings on obscure cable TV channels. As a result, many of today's kids have only heard of Daffy Duck and his pals through tales told by their misty-eyed parents. However, things are now starting to turn around for the toons. The BBC has begun airing the original shows again, and the characters are enjoying an exciting new lease of life online.

LOONEY LIBRARY FOR KIDS
CLICK HERE
What's up doc?
What you see
What you hear
Shall I draw a dog
Shall I draw a pig
What you need
Hey, Kids (your older kids, too) Welcome to the Looney Tunes School of Drawing! Now you can learn how to be the kind of artist who draws attention with guys
Menu
Bosko
Melodies
Back
Next
Print

Budding cartoonists of tomorrow can brush up on their drawing skills thanks to the sketching exercises on the site

All of your favourite Looney Tunes characters are given their chance to shine in the Stars of the Show section

Online adventures

Launched in May 2001, LooneyTunes.com gave the crazy animations a home on the Web, allowing lifelong fans to reminisce about their salad days spent curled up in the front room watching Wile E Coyote dropping anvils on his head, and providing Warner Brothers with a means of showing the Millennium's kids what they've been missing.

> **"YOU'D BE HARD-PUSHED TO FIND STRONGER UNIQUE ONLINE CONTENT" WARNER BROS' BARNEY LOEHNIS**

"Looney Tunes has a truly huge legacy," explains Sam Ades, Director of Strategic and Brand Initiatives for Warner Bros Online.

"We wanted to give it a presence in new media to attract new audiences and deliver a new experience for old fans."

A few short months after its US launch, Warner Bros put six international versions of the site online, including LooneyTunes.co.uk. As Ades' British-based colleague, Barney Loehnis, Director of New Media for Warner Bros, points out: "The content is virtually identical but we wanted to address the local audience, making it more relevant for its audience and, in the case of the European site, translating the text."

Constructing the site took around eight months from conception to construction, and was hit by several hold-ups, mainly owing to the fact that the brand belongs to a lot of different people.

Ades recalls: "Legions of people were involved in creating the site, which took a very, very big effort. Besides the Web developers we also used a team of professional animators and had our consumer products division providing lots of input."

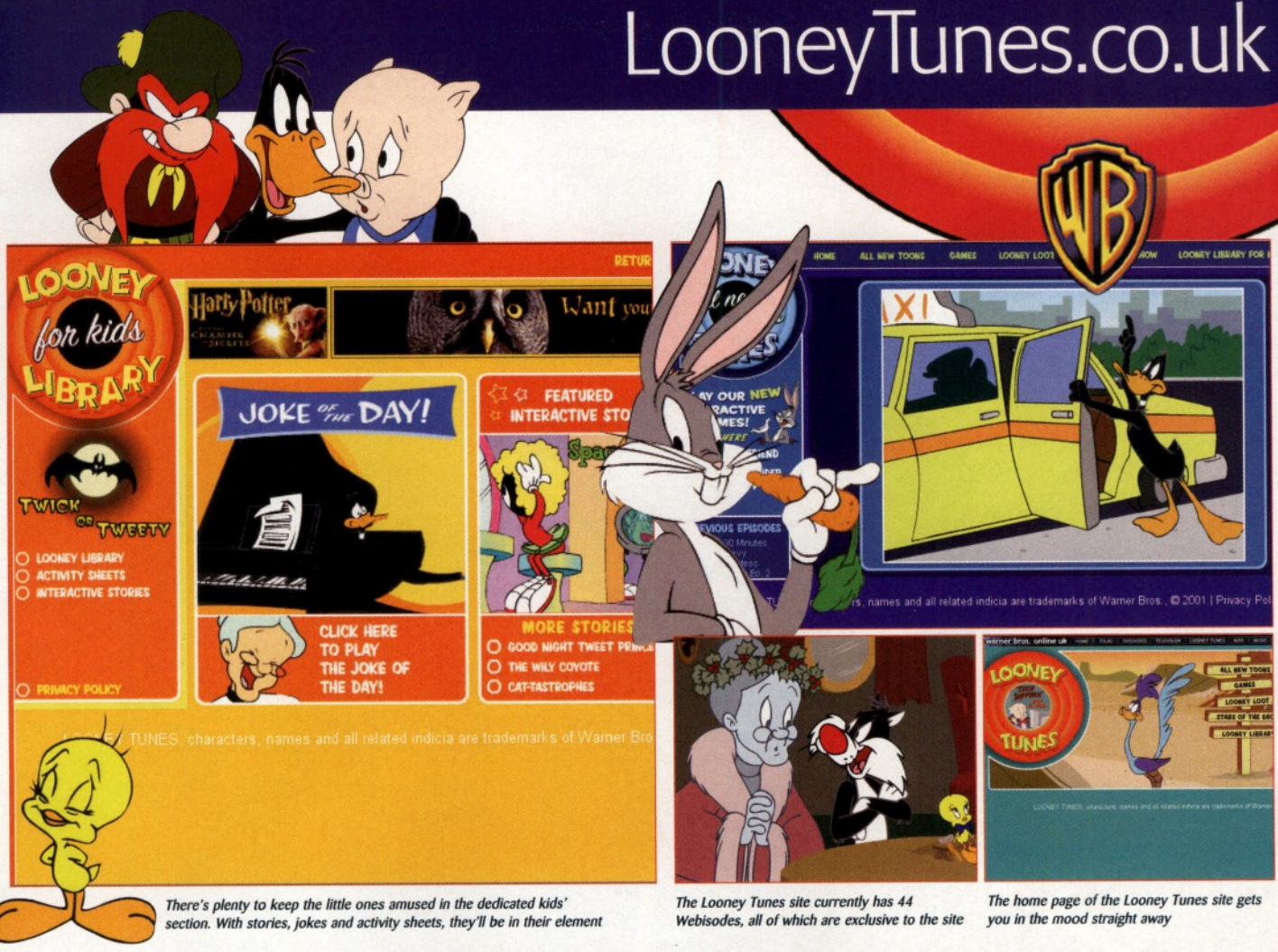
Fun with Flash

Arguably the most popular section of the site is its 'Webisodes', a collection of cartoons produced exclusively for the site that feature everyone's Looney Tunes heroes. Each Webisode takes around three months to produce, and is made using a combination of traditional animation techniques and the latest Web graphics software. The toons are hand-drawn by classic animators then brought to life for the Web using Flash. The Macromedia package is also used for storyboarding and adding voiceovers. While most of the actors who provided the original voiceovers have now sadly passed on, Warner Bros has been using the same official voices for the past 10 years, many of which sound virtually identical to the originals. The one member of the old-school voiceover artists is June Foray, who after over 50 years is still providing the voices for Granny and Witch Hazel for the Webisodes.

"The Webisodes are stunning," enthuses Loehnis. "You'd be hard-pushed to find stronger unique online content anywhere else."

While they may sound slightly biased, Loehnis admits that the team aren't pretending to be Mel Blanc or Fritz Freleng, rather they are

LooneyTunes.co.uk



There's plenty to keep the little ones amused in the dedicated kids' section. With stories, jokes and activity sheets, they'll be in their element

The Looney Tunes site currently has 44 Webisodes, all of which are exclusive to the site

The home page of the Looney Tunes site gets you in the mood straight away

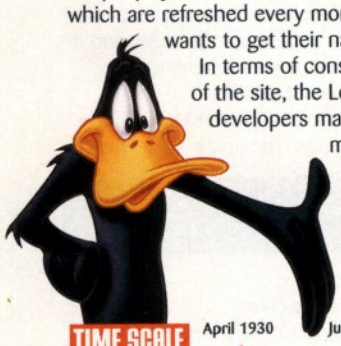
attempting to bring the Looney Tunes legacy to a new audience.

"The Webisodes have huge pulling power to the entire online audience. Adults love the sense of parody within the cartoons and they're made to look fresh and contemporary to appeal to younger visitors."

Play the game

Loehnis and his team have been careful to ensure that people want to return to the site time and time again. One of the key tools for achieving this has been the inclusion of Flash-built games, such as the highly addictive Cannonball Follies starring Yosemite Sam, and Daffy Duck's Robin Hood Challenge.

Ades adds: "Games have universal appeal. People play for hours to better the high scores, which are refreshed every month. Everyone wants to get their name on the site."



In terms of constructing the rest of the site, the Looney Tunes developers made use of mainstream programs such as Illustrator and Photoshop to introduce stunning graphical elements. While some HTML is used for the site's discrete pages, much has been built with JSP, which was used to create dynamic pages, allowing the site to be updated quickly and easily.

Although it's not the sort of site that needs a great deal of regular tweaking, Looney Tunes has a bank of 44 Webisodes that are rotated on a regular basis to add some diversity. The UK version of the site has introduced a 'Character of the month' feature, currently being plugged on BBCi and Cartoon Network, which serves up a range of episodes, competitions and games based around a particular toon star. There's also a dedicated kids section, where fledgling cartoonists can learn to draw their favourite characters and take part in interactive stories.

What's next doc?

After only two years in existence, the Looney Tunes site is already in a strong position, and currently lies second only to Cartoon Network as the most popular animation site on the Web. However, the team believe this is only the beginning for them and insist that there's plenty of life left in the old dog (or rabbit, duck, pig, roadrunner, Martian...). With a new version of the site planned to coincide with the launch of a new film – *Looney Tunes Back in Action* – at the end of the year, it looks like the toons resurgence can only blossom.

"After 75 years the characters really belong to the fans, and we believe in stewardship rather than ownership," Loehnis explains. "As well as introducing different types of games, we're looking to offer different content experiences in order to provide a more active community and give fans a more active role."

Ades takes up the charge, adding: "Looney Tunes has such a rich history and so many facets that we're in no way out of ideas, and have merely scratched the service so far."

So, contrary to what a certain bow tie wearing swine may tell you, that's not all folks.

Site stats

Looney Tunes
www.looneytunes.co.uk

- **Who designed it?**
  In-house
- **Number of people involved?**
  "Legions", including Web developers, animators and consumer products division
- **Software used?**
  Macromedia Flash, Adobe Illustrator, Adobe Photoshop, JSP, HTML
- **Number of exclusive Web episodes made?**
  44

TIME SCALE

April 1930 – The first Looney Tunes cartoon, *Sinkin' in the Bathtub*, is released by Hugo Harman and Rudolf Ising

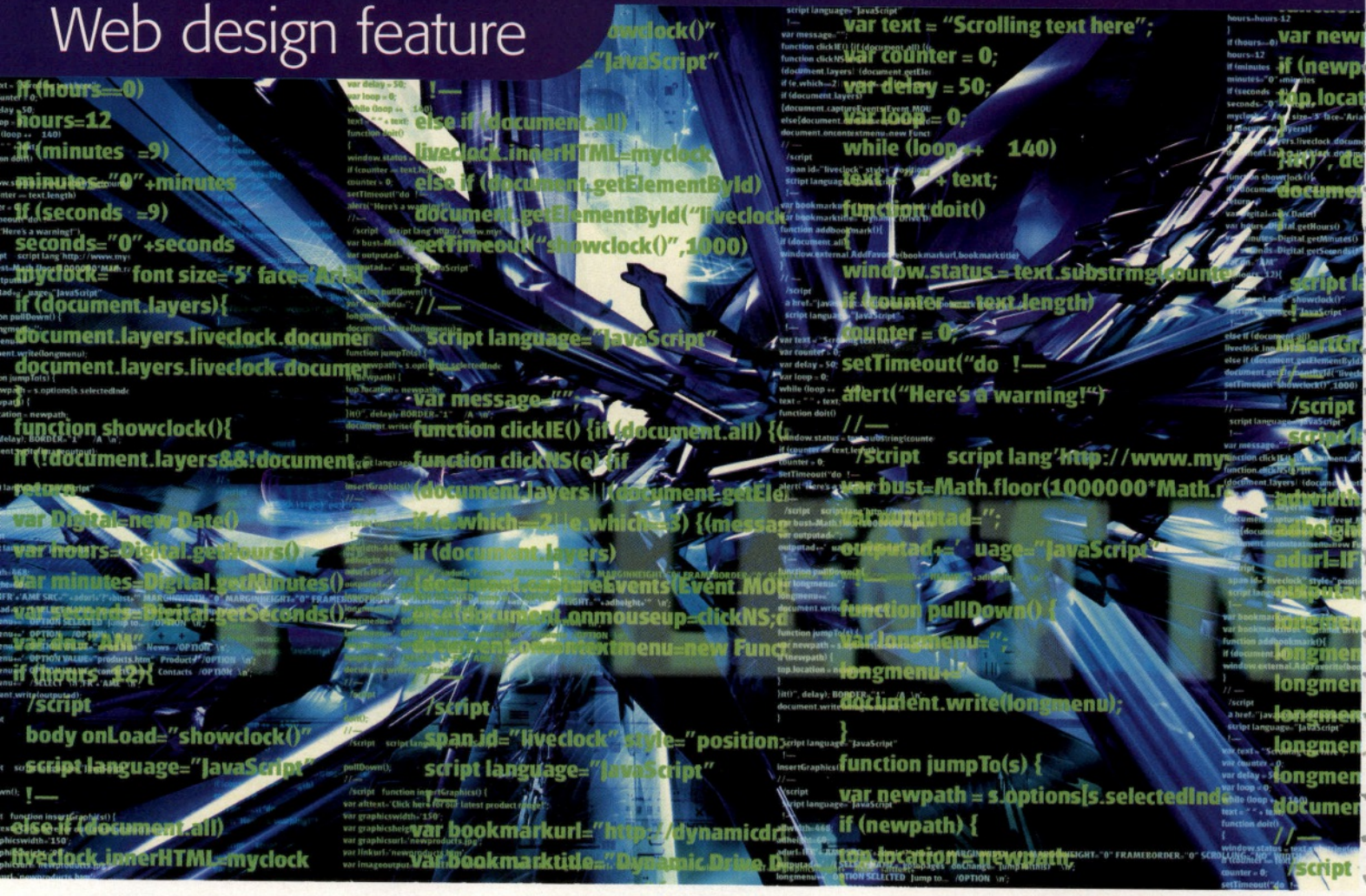
June 1938 – Wascily wabbit Bugs Bunny first hits our screens, appearing in *Porky's Hare Hunt*

July 1989 – Mel Blanc, who famously voiced the majority of the Looney Tunes characters, dies aged 81

Sept 1990 – Looney Tunes spin-off *Tiny Toon Adventures* is launched to entice younger audiences, with Blanc's son, Noel, providing some of the voices

May 2001 – The first version of the Looney Tunes Web site is launched in the US

Sept 2001 – The toons come to Britain as LooneyTunes.co.uk is launched along with five other international sites throughout Europe



Dynamic Web sites

WE SHOW YOU HOW TO JOIN THE DYNAMIC REVOLUTION, AND FORGET LENGTHY HTML UPDATES ONCE AND FOR ALL

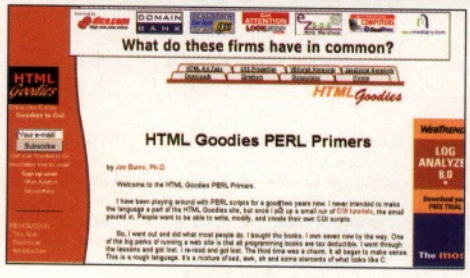
Have you ever wondered how all those flashy news-based sites keep their content updated without employing hundreds and hundreds of Web editors? Or perhaps how some amateur sites can look as good as their professional peers? The key to it all lies in whether a Web site is dynamic or not.

To understand the concept of a dynamic Web site, you should look a static site first. A static site is basically a series of Web pages that change periodically. When the content is changed, the Web designer generally goes through the process by hand, modifying the existing pages, adding new content and uploading these new pages manually to the server. A dynamic Web site laughs in the face of this method, and instead uses a series of scripts to update the code. Very often this means that the user makes the changes to the site from a simple administration screen and no other coding is required.

The most widely available example of dynamic sites are news pages. To keep up with the rest of the competition, it's vital that a news page is updated many times an hour. However, instead of the Web editor having to redesign the page each time, a dynamic content engine is used to work with an existing Web template and deliver the pages to the server, ready to be picked up by the reader. Using a script, the Web editor just inputs the news story into a template screen and clicks 'OK'; the code then updates the template. It sounds like a simple process, and it can be, but there are many different ways to deliver dynamic content like this.

How you get dynamic content onto your site depends on two things. The first is what kind of

Find out more...



Name: HTML Goodies
URL: www.htmlgoodies.com
There's a lot of ground to cover when thinking about creating your own dynamic site so you are bound to need some more information than space allows here. A good source for the beginner is HTML Goodies, which features some excellent tutorials and a number of primers on Perl & CGI programming and Web databases.

Web hosting package you subscribe to and how much you know about scripting. If you have some Web space with your ISP then it is unlikely they will allow you to run CGI scripts (for security reasons, and the ones that do allow them will charge you extra for the privilege), PHP, or let you have access to a MySQL database. If this is the case (which is more than likely) you will probably want to use Dynamic HTML to pep up your Web site.

This extended version of HTML allows the user to create dynamic applets that can deliver content to a Web site without any specialist Web server needs. A good resource for DHTML code is Dynamic Drive (**www.dynamicdrive.com**), which has a healthy number of pre-programmed code that you can simply slot into your existing HTML code and use on your site straight away. Another script site that you may want to check out is the Daily Content DHTML code (**www.dynamicdrive.com/dynamicindex17/dowiframe.htm**), which allows you to keep your site fresh as a daisy by changing the content daily. The new information is stored in seven separate HTML files and these are then slotted into your Web template when the date changes, allowing you to plan a whole week's worth of Web updates without any stress whatsoever. The other DHTML scripts on this site work in a similar way and we are sure you will find one suitable for your needs.

"DYNAMIC NEWS SCRIPTS CAN GIVE YOUR SITE A PROFESSIONAL EDGE"

Making the headlines

If we move up the ladder one rung and imagine that your Web host allows you to run unsolicited CGI scripts, you will be happy to know that there are many dynamic news scripts out there that you can use to give your site a professional edge. One of the most popular CGI news generators is called Coranto (**coranto.gweilo.org**), which is pretty easy to install if you follow the instructions correctly. This script can be used to deliver regular news updates or to power a diary or Web log page. It is well supported and there are a number of add-ons and themes (different colour schemes and design templates) to download and customise your Coranto news source.

For more dynamic CGI scripts to install onto your site, check out The CGI Resource Index (**cgi.resourceindex.com**) or Scriptsearch (**www.scriptsearch.com**). In many cases, installation of these scripts is a cinch and often involves just uploading the script into the cgi bin folder on your site and running an installation script.

Using PHP and a MySQL database is another popular way of delivering dynamic content on to your site. PHP can pretty much do anything that CGI can do, but its real strength is its ability to communicate across many platforms and its compatibility with many different database formats. This proves to be a valuable asset for anyone constructing a dynamic site, because using a database to store the information on your site means that you can see exactly what is happening behind the scenes (if you have experience of MySQL, that is). Perhaps more important is the fact that you can easily back up and restore your database if you want to move hosts or have a major crash.

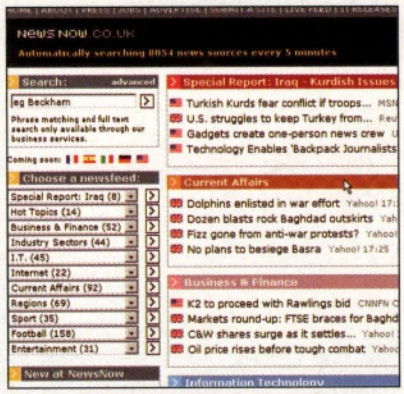
Nuclear database power

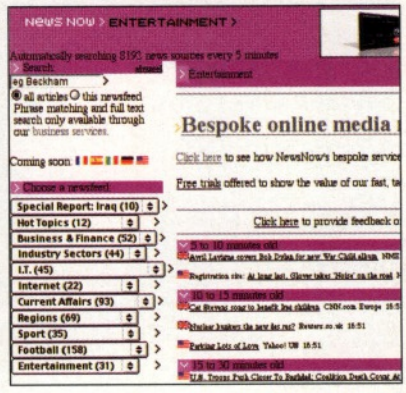
One of the most popular PHP scripts for this job is PHP-Nuke (**www.phpnuke.org**), which bills itself as an advanced content management system. It's pretty powerful and allows you to put news, a forum and all manner of interactive add-ons using one integrated script. Again, there are plenty of add-ons and upgrades to make this a customisable experience, but there still seem to be many PHP Nuke-based sites out there that tend to look the same. Those with a strong individual bent should visit the PHP Resource Index (**php.resourceindex.com**) for a different content delivery script, such as GeekLog (**www.nphp.net**).

Of course, there's more to creating a dynamic site than uploading a bit of code, but think of this as the first step along the road. There's nothing wrong with using pre-programmed code and you can make a really cool site if used subtly. However, if you want to create something that really stands out, be prepared to invest your time into learning how to program CGI and PHP scripts from scratch, because that's how the big boys do it.

In action – NewsNow

IF YOU WANT to see a really good dynamic site in action, then start with the most up-to-date news portal on the Web – NewsNow (**www.newsnow.co.uk**). The site allows the user to search news using a series of newsfeeds, generated by topic, and linking directly to the independent news source. Using a complex CGI-scripted engine, the site is updated every five minutes and is probably the best example of a dynamic site on the Web today.





Prime example

PORTAL HOME | MESSAGE BOARDS | LINKS | DOWNLOADS | GALLERY | PORTAL NEWS | NUKE TOOLS
NUKE MODULES
NEW NUKE FILES
TOP NUKE FILES
ESCAPE ROUTES

TAKING THE CUSTOMISABLE PHPNuke script as our example of an easy dynamic Web site creation tool, there are some really good examples of what can be done with this code. One of the best examples of PHPNuke, which has a number of customisations installed, is MoffStar (**www.moffstarr.com**).

In brief:
Task: Create a simple Flash Web site with little content
Software I need: Flash MX
Difficulty: Intermediate
Time I need: 1 hour

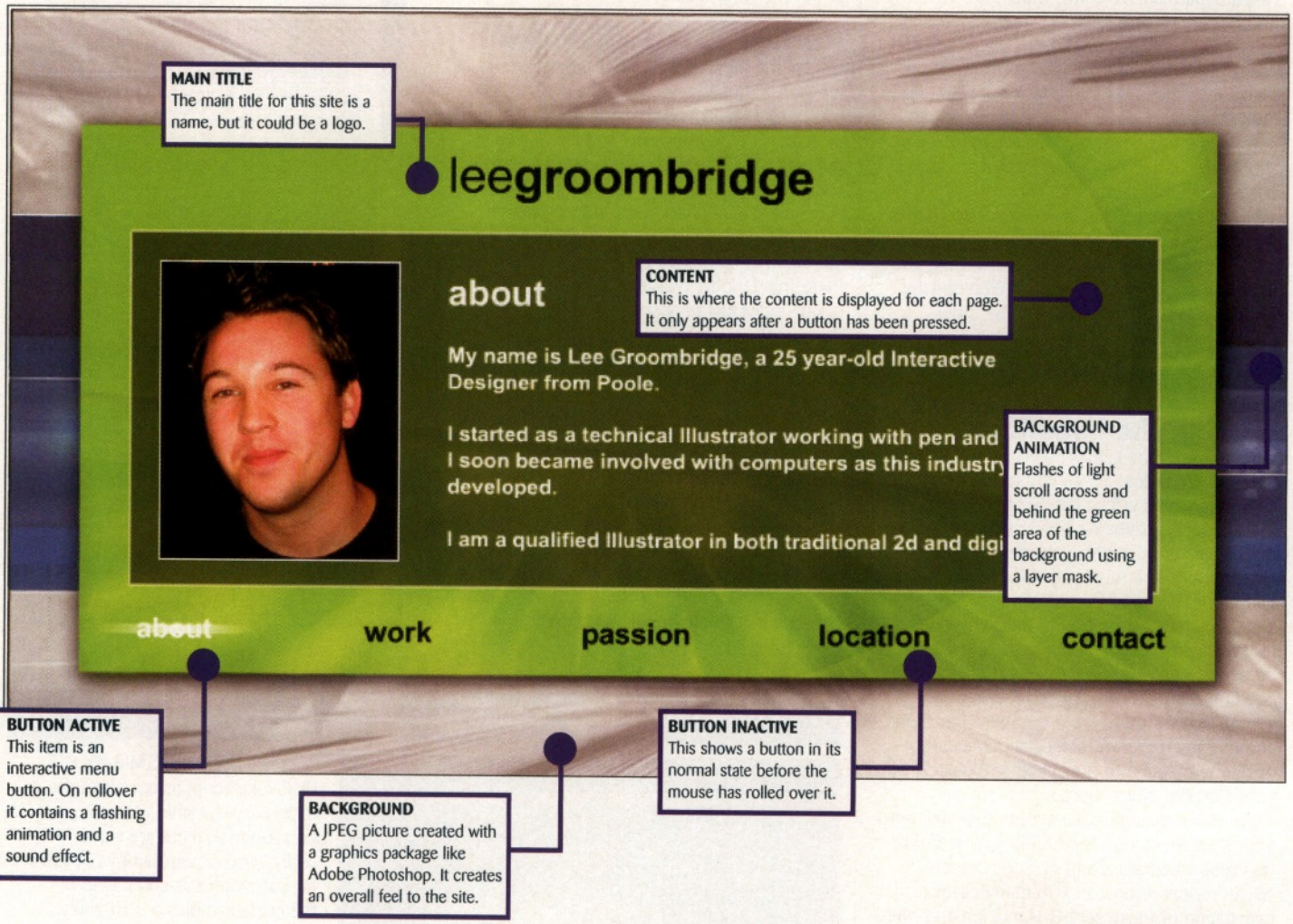
Practical internet IT'S ON THE CD

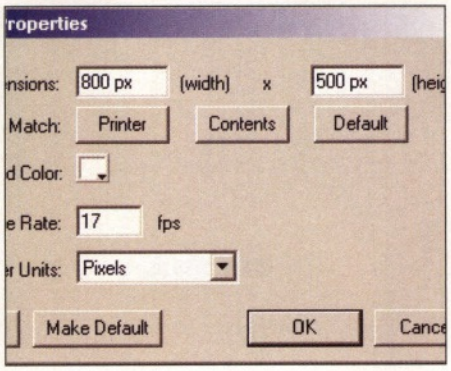
Create a simple, eye-catching Flash Web site

WITH A STRONG DESIGN IDEA AND THE HELP OF FLASH MX, YOU CAN TRANSFORM AN ORDINARY STATIC HOME PAGE INTO SOMETHING THAT'LL IMPRESS YOUR VISITORS

IN THIS DAY and age, there's no excuse for having a boring static home page. With the introduction of Web tools such as Flash MX, it has become far easier to transform a simple HTML Web site into something you can be really proud of. Knowledge of good design is still essential to make a Web site stand out from the rest, but by following this workshop you will discover how to add a bit of flair with a few Flash tricks. We're going to show you how to make menu buttons with sound effects, add animation that will constantly run in a background and also create animation that is responsive to mouse movement. At the heart of all this will be a very simple, but very effective, navigation system.

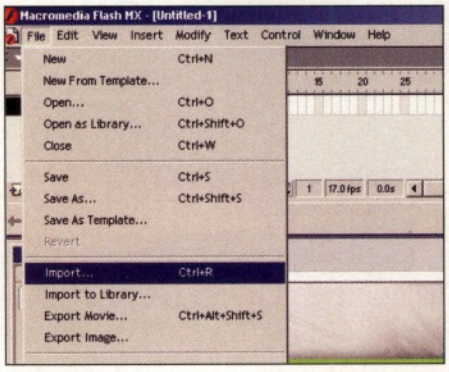
Although the idea of this workshop is to create something simple, there's still plenty of scope to further enhance the site as you add more elements and get more confident. All of the content included in this mini site is obviously for demonstration purposes, so simply change the menu titles and content to whatever suits your needs.


MAIN TITLE
The main title for this site is a name, but it could be a logo.
leegroombridge
about
CONTENT
This is where the content is displayed for each page. It only appears after a button has been pressed.
My name is Lee Groombridge, a 25 year-old Interactive Designer from Poole.
I started as a technical Illustrator working with pen and
I soon became involved with computers as this industry developed.
I am a qualified Illustrator in both traditional 2d and digi
BACKGROUND ANIMATION
Flashes of light scroll across and behind the green area of the background using a layer mask.
about
work
passion
location
contact
BUTTON ACTIVE
This item is an interactive menu button. On rollover it contains a flashing animation and a sound effect.
BACKGROUND
A JPEG picture created with a graphics package like Adobe Photoshop. It creates an overall feel to the site.
BUTTON INACTIVE
This shows a button in its normal state before the mouse has rolled over it.



1 Get started

Flash MX opens a new document when you start the application, so the first thing to do is set the dimensions to 800 x 500. To access the Document Properties, go to 'Modify', then 'Documents'. Make the changes and click 'OK'.

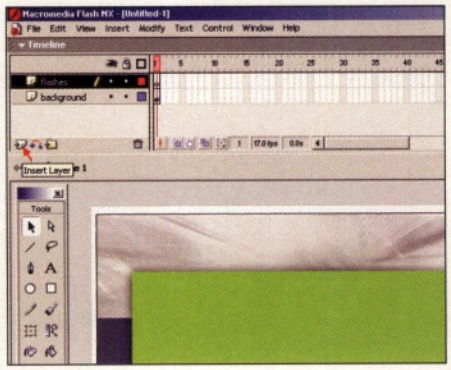


2 Import the background

We've included a background on the cover CD called 'leegroombridge_back.jpg'. Import it by selecting 'File', 'Import' and then browse to the image and click 'OK'. Remember to align the image to the middle of the stage.

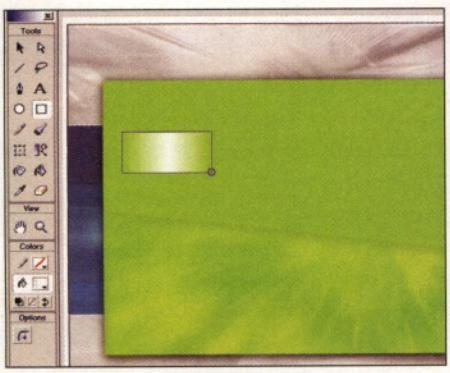
3 Naming a layer

It is a good idea to name your layers. Select the layer you want to rename with a single click on the existing name, and then go to 'Modify', 'Layer...'. Type 'background' in the name field and click 'OK' in the pop-up that appears.



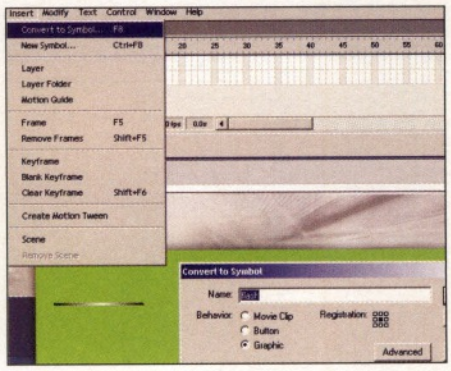
4 More layers.

The next job is to insert a new layer on the timeline, which will introduce animation to the site. To insert a new layer, click on the 'Insert layer' icon under the existing layer you have just renamed. Rename this layer to 'Flashes'.



5 Create a flash

Click the 'Flashes' layer and choose the 'Rectangle' tool. Change the 'Stroke' to 'None' and the 'Fill' to an 'alpha gradient' (see Power Users' Tip on page 54 if you need help with this). Now click and drag a rectangle on the stage.



6 Create a graphic symbol

Use the 'Arrow' tool to select the rectangle and go to 'Insert', 'Convert to Symbol...'. A pop-up will appear. Rename the symbol to 'flash' and click the 'Graphic' radio button. Now click 'OK'. This graphic symbol will now appear in your library.

Jargon buster

The timeline

This organises and controls a movie's content over time using layers and frames. Flash movies divide lengths of time into frames in much the same way as films do. Layers stack on top of each other within the timeline, each with a different image that appears on the stage. Objects overlap if they are on layers above each other.

Layers

These are like transparent sheets of paper stacked on top of each other. Layers help to organise the objects and images in your document. You can alter and edit objects on one layer without affecting objects on another layer. You can also lock, hide and outline the content on specific layers.

Keyframe

Keyframes are the main components of the animation process and allow you to define a change in an animation. Whether it's from bright to dark or one position to another, Flash tweens (fills in) the frames between keyframes to produce fluid animations. This makes creating and editing animation very simple. You can also include frame actions to a keyframe to make a movie interactive.

Graphic symbol

These are static objects, created with the purpose of applying 'Property effects'. You can't tween a shape unless it is first converted to a graphic symbol. Graphic symbols are reusable and are normally used to reduce the file sizes and loading time of movies that are designed for the Web. You can't apply ActionScripting to a graphic symbol.

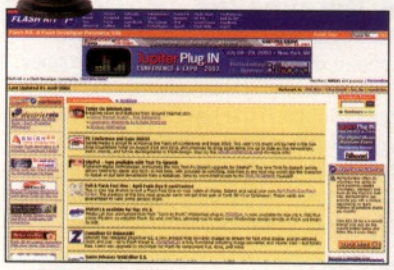
Button symbol

These are created to add interactivity to a movie. Button symbols in the movie respond to mouse events such as clicks, rollovers etc... A button has four states: Up, Over, Down and Hit. You define each state, adding an object to the respective frame. You can apply actions to a button instance.

Movie clip symbol

These are reusable pieces of animation. Movie clips have their own timeline that plays independently to the movie's main timeline. These self-contained elements can contain interactive controls, sounds, and also other movie clips. Place one on the Over frame of a button symbol and it will play when the mouse rolls over that particular button.

Web resources



Flashkit
www.flashkit.com

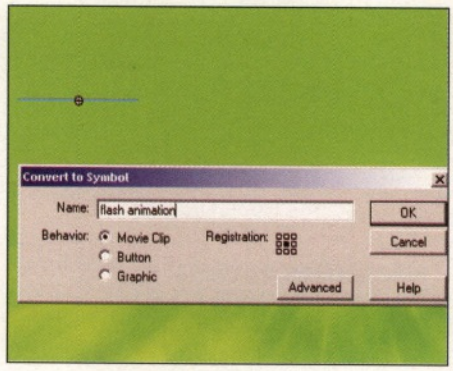
This is probably the largest Flash resource site around. There are loads of tutorials, movies, sound effects and links to download and explore. It doesn't matter if you are an expert or beginner, everyone will find something useful here.

Ultrashock
www.ultrashock.com

This is a Flash resource site whose design is one to admire and learn from, especially the introduction. Once you delve beyond the design, you'll find a healthy range of tutorials, covering everything from rollovers to full games.

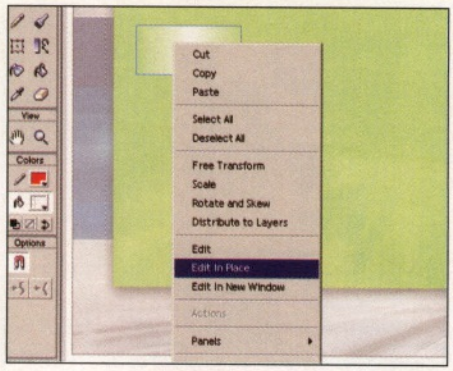
Power users' tip

TO CREATE AN alpha gradient for the background, you need to open the Colour Mixer Palette ('Window', 'Colour Mixer') and then select 'Linear' the drop-down menu found in the middle of this palette. A coloured bar will appear below the menu. If you click on the middle of the bar, you'll see a tiny square. You should also see three tiny squares under the bar. Click on them one at a time and change their values to R=255, G=255, B=255, Alpha=0% except for the middle square that should have alpha=100%. You have now created an alpha gradient. Use the 'Fill' tool to apply it to a shape.



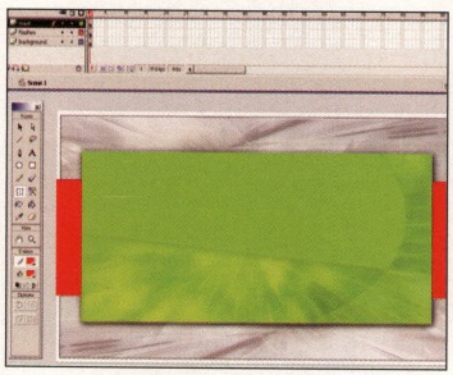
7 Create a movie clip symbol

Select the 'Flash' graphic with the 'Arrow' tool. Again, go to 'Insert', 'Convert to Symbol...', but this time, rename it to 'flash animation' and click 'Movie Clip'. Now click 'OK'. This movie clip symbol will also appear in the library.



8 Get inside the movie clip

Right-click ('CTRL' + click for Mac) on the 'Flash animation' movie clip and select 'Edit in Place'. The background image should fade. Now you are inside the movie clip, click on 'frame 10' on the timeline and go 'Insert', 'KeyFrame'.

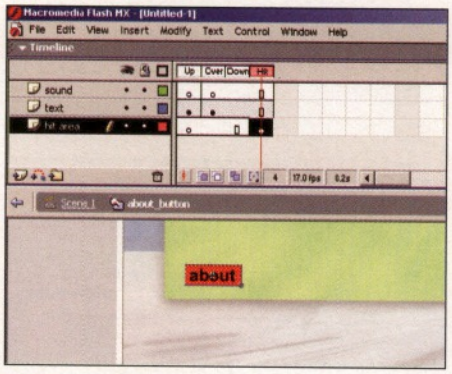


11 Add a mask

To get out of the movie clip, click 'Scene 1' on the navigation bar. Insert a new layer above 'flashes' and rename it 'mask'. Draw two rectangles to cover the blue on the background. Right-click the layer name and select 'Mask'.

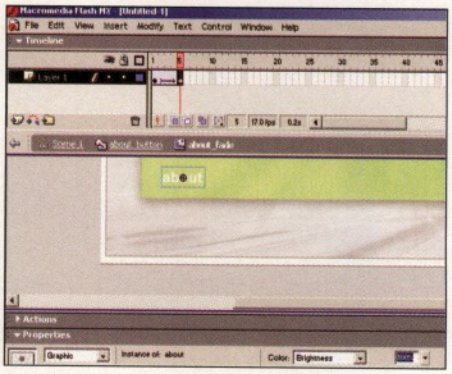
12 Add the text...

Insert a layer called 'logo' above the mask layer. With the 'Text' tool selected, click on the stage and type 'LeeGroombridge'. To modify the font and size, use the 'Properties' panel. Here we have used Arial, size 30 and Bold.



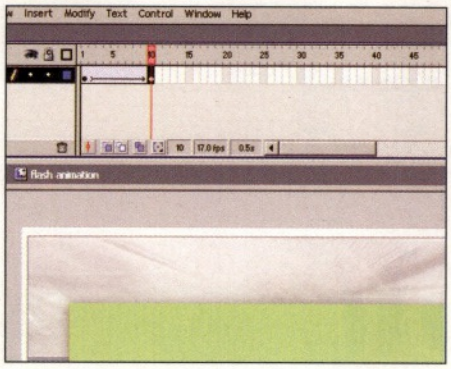
15 The hit area

Draw a red rectangle over the text in the 'Hit area' layer on 'frame 4'. This is the area in which the button will activate. Now select 'frame 2' of the text layer and convert it to a movie clip called 'about_fade'.



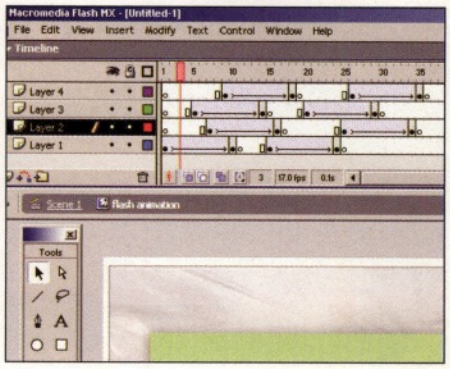
16 The button rollover

'Edit in Place' the 'about_fade' and insert a keyframe on 'frame 5'. Select the 'about' graphic on the stage. Go to the 'Colour' menu in the 'Properties' panel and change the brightness to '100%'. Now create a motion tween from 'frame 1'.



9 Add a motion tween

Single-click the first keyframe and go to 'Insert', 'Create motion tween'. A blue arrow should appear on the timeline. With the 'Arrow' tool, select the 'flash' graphic in 'frame 10' and move it to the other side of the background.



10 Repeat...

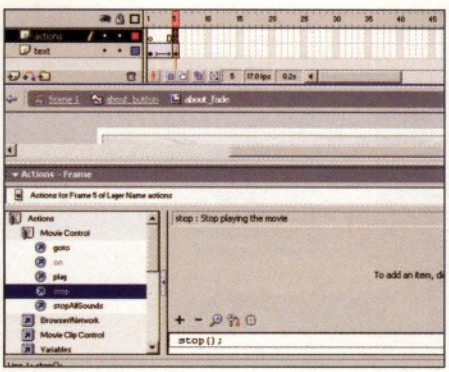
To insert more layers into the movie clip, select the 'flash' graphic on 'frame 1' and go to 'Edit', 'Copy', select another layer and go to 'Edit', 'Paste'. Realign the graphic's position on the stage and repeat steps nine and 10 to get the desired effect.

13 Add buttons

Insert a layer called 'buttons'. With the 'Text' tool, type 'about' and convert it to a graphic symbol called 'about'. Convert the 'about' graphic to a button symbol called 'about_button' .This is the same as step six, only we select 'Button' instead of 'Graphic'.

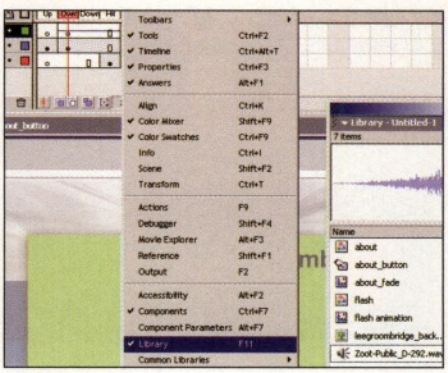
14 Setting up the button

Select this button and then 'Edit in Place'. Insert two layers – these are 'hit area' and 'sound'. Add a keyframe to 'frame 2' of the text and sound layers and a keyframe to 'frame 4' of the hit area layer as above.



17 Frame stop

Open up the ActionScript window, insert a new layer called 'actions' and add a keyframe to 'frame 5'. With that frame selected, click 'Action', 'MovieControl', then 'Stop' within the script window. A little 'a' will appear to show a script is there.



18 Sound.

Go into the 'about_button' symbol and import 'Zoot-Public_D-292.wav' from the disc using the method in step two. The sound will appear in the library. Select 'frame 2' on the sound layer and click and drag the sound from the library to the stage.

Jargon buster

JPEG

JPEG is the perfect format for importing photographs into Flash as file sizes are very small when compared to other compression types such as .TIFF or .PNG. Note that if you alter the size of a JPEG in Flash MX, it may distort.

Publishing

Any movie created in Flash MX has to be published so it can be viewed. There are options for you to publish your movie in a format that can be viewed on the Web or a standalone player. The most common format for Flash content is a .SWF file. The Publish settings can be changed from the 'File', 'Publish setting' menu.

ActionScript

This is Flash's own built-in scripting language. Using this programming language you can add interactivity and animation to any Flash movie. The introduction of Flash MX has increased the strength of this language and the 'Action' window allows you to create some amazing effects with relatively little knowledge.

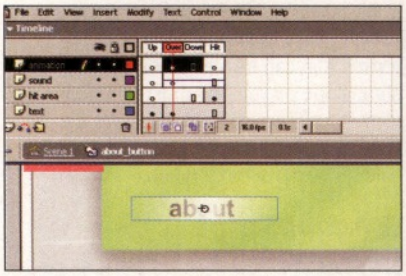
Power users' tip

JPEG COMPRESSION IS an area of Flash that is sometimes overlooked, but which allows you to import images to be compressed within Flash MX itself – no other image editor is required. You can use this function to make a dramatic difference to a file's size. In the above example, we have imported a JPEG and double-clicked the item in the library to bring up the Bitmap Properties pop-up. You can see it is preset to 'Use imported JPEG data'. Uncheck the box to the left. A percentage number will appear – type '50%' and click 'Test'. You'll now see the new compressed size.

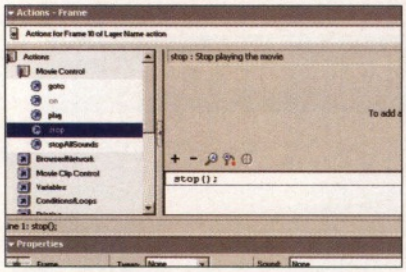
How to...

Add animation to your site's buttons

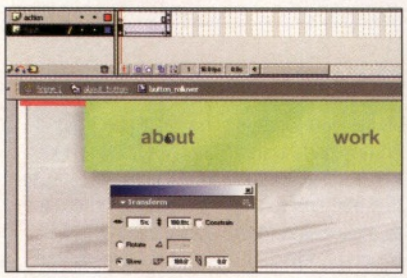
Navigation is at the core of every site, so the more you can do to make it interesting, the better. This three-step tutorial will quickly show you how and where to put a movie clip into a button's timeline in order to have an animating button on rollover. The steps here do assume a basic knowledge of the workshop.



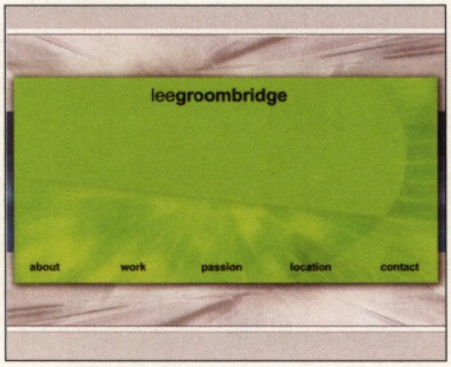
1 Create your button and set the layers and keyframes as shown in the screenshot above. On the animation layer, draw a rectangle with a gradient fill that fades on the edges. Convert to a graphic symbol and then convert to a movie clip symbol.



2 You now need to 'Edit in Place' this movie clip symbol. Add a keyframe to 'frame 10'. Now add a new layer called actions and on 'frame 10', add a keyframe. Put a 'stop' frame script in here.

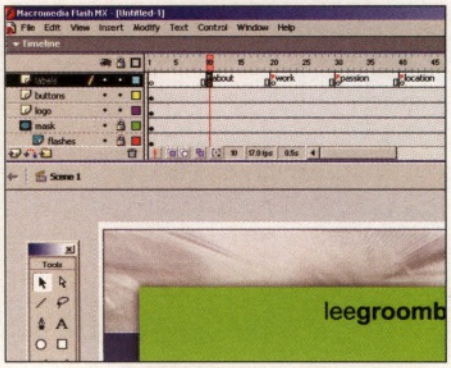


3 Select the rectangle on 'frame 1' and go to 'Modify', 'Transform', 'Free transform' and reduce to '5%' width. Now go to 'frame 10', select the rectangle and change the width to '150%'. Change the alpha to '0%' on frame 10.



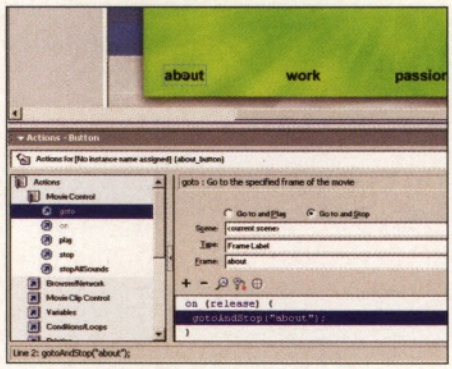
19 The menu

This button is nearly complete – all that's left is a flashing animation. You can attempt this yourself or see the box out to your left. Now all you have to do is repeat steps 14 to 19 to make the other buttons for the menu.



20 Add the labels

Insert a layer called 'labels'. Insert a keyframe every 10 frames until you get to frame 60. Now select frame 10 and label it 'about' using 'Frame label' in the Properties panel. Repeat this with the other four titles.



21 Make the buttons work

Select the 'about' button. Now open the 'Action' panel and select 'Actions', 'Movie Control', 'goto'. Click the 'Go to' line and change the options to 'Go to and Stop', 'Scene=<current>', 'Type=Frame label', 'Frame=about'. Repeat with the other buttons.

22 Add the text background.

Insert a new layer called 'box'. Add 60 frames and on frame 10, add a keyframe. Draw a rectangle as above. Convert this rectangle to a graphic called 'box' and change its alpha to '50%' using same method as step 16.

leegroombridge
about
My name is Lee Groombridge, a 25 year-old Interactive Designer from Poole.
I started as a technical illustrator working with pen and ink. I soon became involved with computers as this industry developed.
I am a qualified illustrator in both traditional 2d and digital 3d.
about
work
passion
location

23 The pages

Insert a layer called 'content' and using the same method as step 21, create five keyframes. Once filled with text and pictures they will be the different pages of your site. There are images and text provided on the disc for each page.

24 Finally...

Insert a new layer called 'actions' on frame one then add a 'stop' frame script as in step 17. Now save your Flash site and publish it. (Go to 'File' then 'Publish'.) Make sure the publish settings are set to Flash and HTML.

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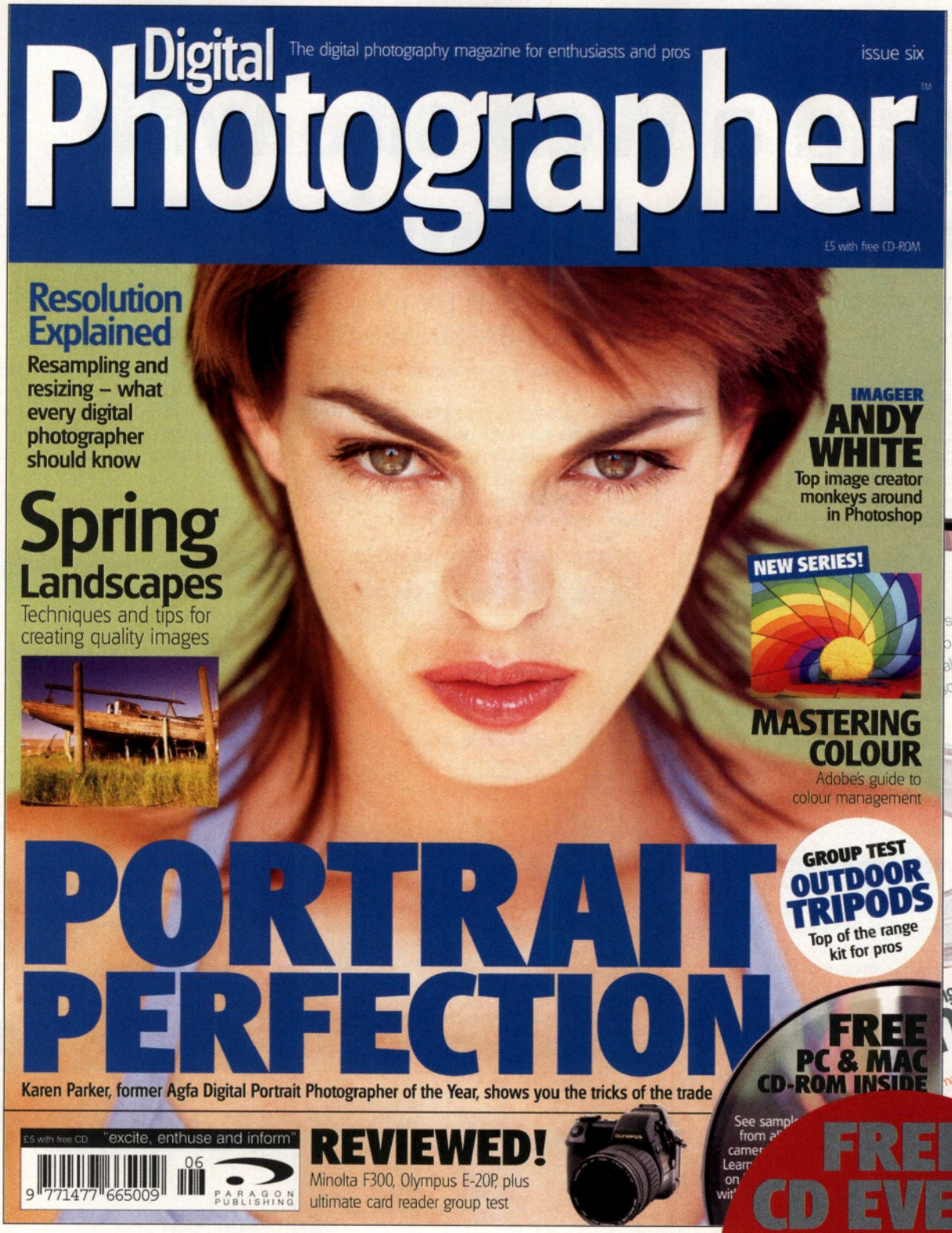
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06
PARAGON PUBLISHING
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Minolta F300, Olympus E-20P, plus ultimate card reader group test

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In brief:
Task: Build a Web site with NetObjects Fusion
Software I need: NetObjects Fusion
Difficulty: It's easy
Time I need: 20-30 minutes

Practical internet IT'S ON THE CD

Build a Web site with NetObjects Fusion 4

CREATE YOUR OWN WEB SITE QUICKLY AND EASILY USING OUR FULLY-WORKING VERSION OF THIS BRILLIANT TEMPLATE-BASED WEB DESIGN PACKAGE

THE THOUGHT OF creating a Web site from scratch can be very daunting to a lot of people, but thanks to the great giveaway on the cover disc of this month's *Practical Internet*, you can become a Webmaster in around half an hour.

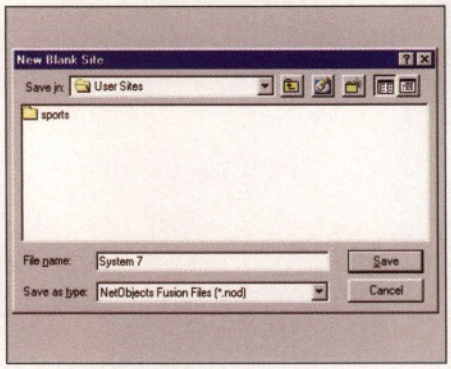
NetObjects Fusion has been a well respected Web design tool for some time and now you have your own copy of the rather swanky software, you're going to want to know how to get going.

NetObjects works in a slightly different way to most of the other Web design tools on the market. For a start, it's mainly concerned with building, maintaining and looking after entire site projects, although it can be manipulated to author individual pages if necessary.

There are stacks of styles built into NetObjects so you don't have to worry about creating buttons, banners or anything like that. We're going to show you how to create a site and then build three pages with text and images to get you started in creating your own site. Then it's time to publish – and NetObjects even has a built-in FTP client for easy uploading.

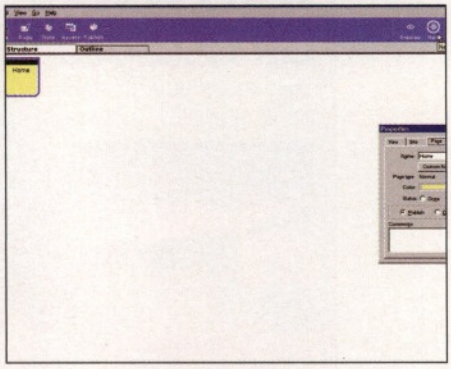
1 Create a new site

After installing NetObjects Fusion, you'll be prompted to restart your computer. Do this and then start the program. The Welcome dialog box will appear, giving you the choice of creating a new site or opening an existing one.



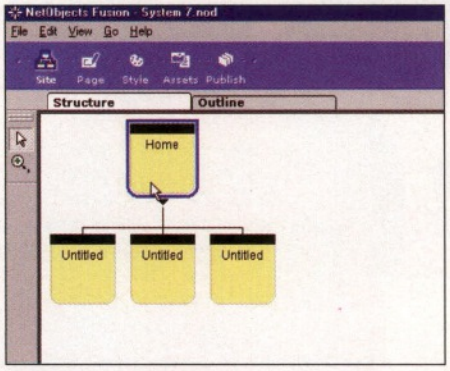
2 Blank site

Make sure you select 'Blank site' and then click 'OK' to display the 'New Blank Site' dialog box. Enter a file name for the Web site – we're calling our site 'System 7'. Hit the 'Save' button and your site will be created in the User Sites folder.



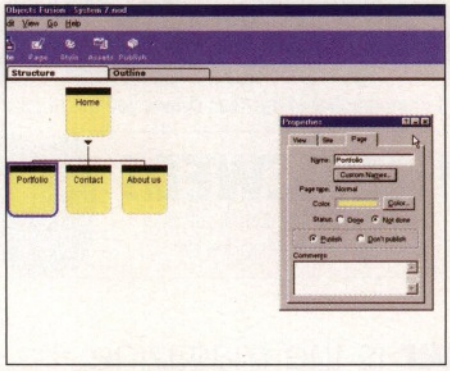
3 Site view

Because NetObjects Fusion works as a database, you have to create the pages in the Site view before you can actually design the pages in the Page view. The home page is automatically created for you. To add a page, click the 'New' icon.



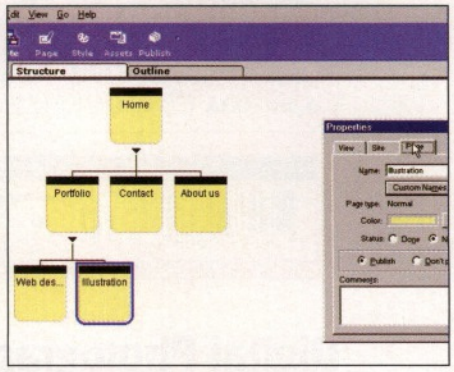
4 New pages

The new page is created immediately below the one you have selected. Press the 'New page' button twice more to create two new pages in the Site view. The site is automatically updated with the new pages – select the first one.



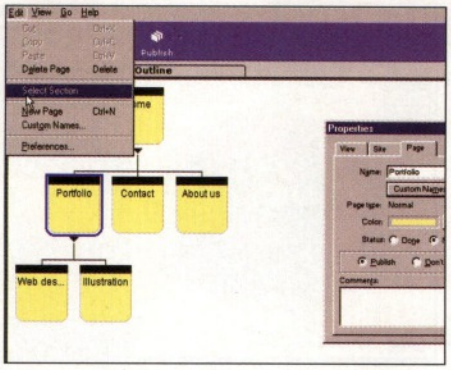
5 Rename the pages

At present, the pages are all untitled, so let's give them a name. In the Properties palette, click on the name and call the first page 'Portfolio'. Select the second page and call it 'Contact'. Finally, select the last page and name it 'About us'.



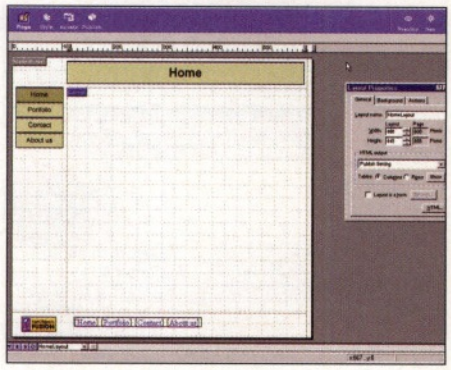
6 Create more pages

Select the 'Portfolio' page and click the 'New' icon twice to create two new pages below the existing Portfolio page. Call the first page 'Web design' and the second page 'Illustration'. These new pages will be navigated to via the Portfolio page.



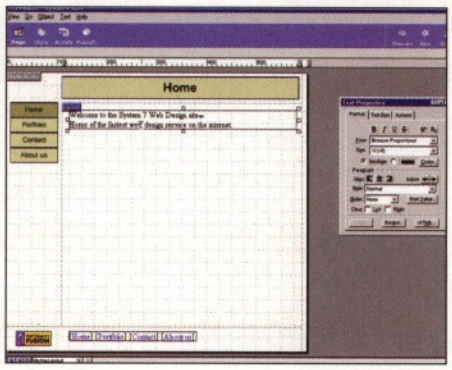
7 A different colour

Select the 'Portfolio' page again and choose 'Select Section' from the 'Edit' menu. The pages immediately below Portfolio are selected. You can change the colour of the section in the Properties palette if you like.



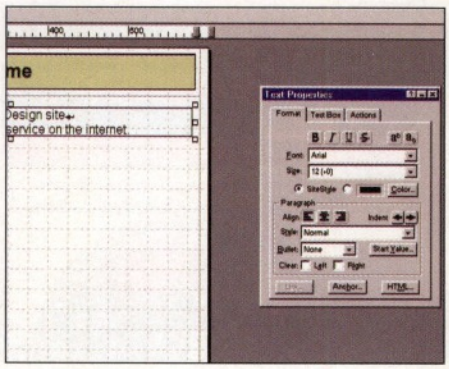
8 Page View

Select the 'Home' page and click on the 'Page' icon on the top bar to move to the Page view. As you can see, there is already a navigation system built as NetObjects has pulled the information from the Site view.



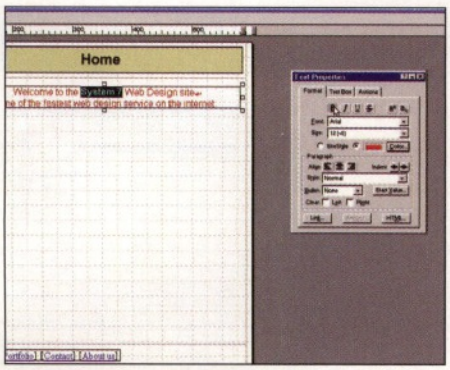
9 Add some text

Select the 'Text' tool from the toolbar on the left-hand side of the screen and draw a text box along the top of the page to add a welcome message. Type a welcome message as shown above. To get a line break, hold down 'SHIFT' and press 'RETURN'.



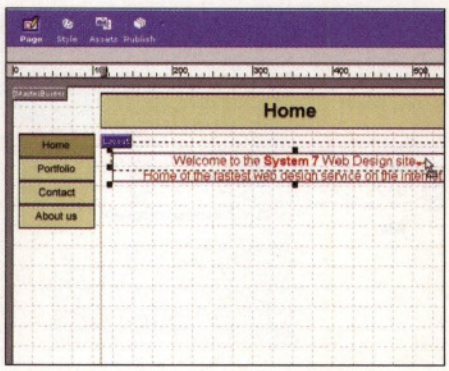
10 Style the text

Highlight the text and change the font to Arial. NetObjects doesn't limit your font usage like some other Web design packages, but always remember there are only three guaranteed Web fonts – Times, Arial and Courier.



11 More formatting

Highlight the text again, hit the centre paragraph button in the 'Properties' palette, then click on the 'Colour' button and change it to a dark red. Finally, highlight the words 'System 7' and then bold these up by clicking the 'Bold' button.



12 Moving the text box

If you need to move your text box, click out of it to deselect it. Now click once on the text box so the outer handles turn black. Once this happens, you will be able to move it around either with the mouse or by pressing the cursor keys.

Jargon buster

Database

A database is used for storing any type of information – in this case it is used to store the names of the pages created in the Web site. This means that NetObjects Fusion can automatically create all the navigational elements for the page with these settings.

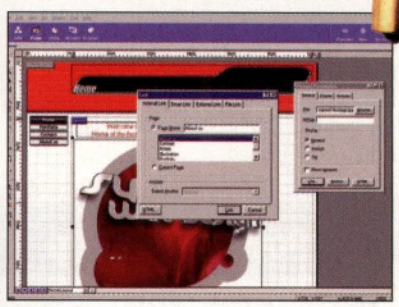
Site view

The Site view is the place where new pages are created and positioned depending on their navigational structure. You create the actual content for the page separately in the Page view. The Site view makes it really easy to see which pages link to each other and is perfect for planning your site.

Publish

NetObjects Fusion doesn't work in standard HTML pages like other Web design packages. Instead it is more akin to a desktop publishing package. When you finally publish your site, NetObjects Fusion takes all that information about your design and reformats it into HTML ready for viewing on the Internet.

Power users' tip

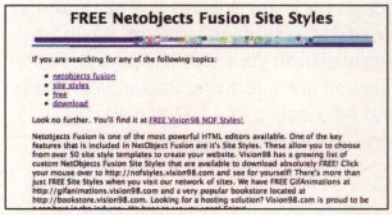


ANY IMAGE THAT is on your Web page can become a link. First select your image and then in the Properties palette, click on the 'Link' button and the link properties will be displayed in a pop-up window. If the image is to link to another page in the Web site, you can select the page from the internal link options. If the link is to another Web site then you will need to click on the external link tab and fill in the complete URL for the site. There is a drop-down menu which allows you to change the format of the link to a mailto link if you want to get feedback. You always have to give every item that's an external link an asset name so it can be referenced.

Web resources

Got Fusion
www.gotfusion.com

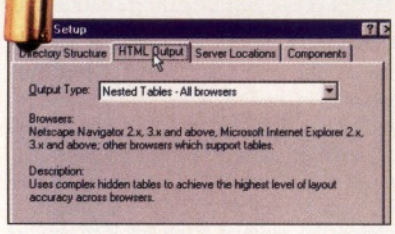
This site is dedicated to all things related to NetObjects Fusion. Here you will find amazing tutorials, resources and even awards for the best site that has been created with the program. The resources section also has a wealth of extra styles that are available to download completely free of charge.


FREE Netobjects Fusion Site Styles
If you are searching for any of the following topics:
netobjects fusion
site styles
free
download
Look no further. You'll find it at FREE Vision98 NOF Styles!

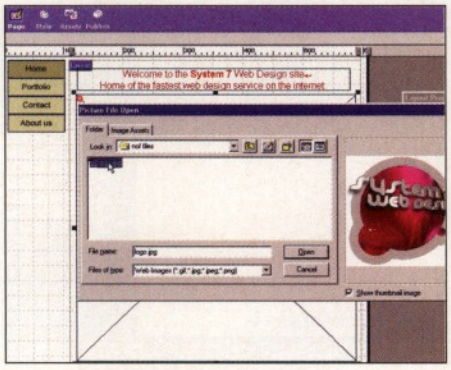
NOF Styles
nofstyles.vision98.com/nofav.html

This site contains over 50 site styles ready for download so that your Web sites can look even better. Plus there is a really easy to follow tutorial on how to build your own site style and customise the banner, graphics and buttons to match your design.

Power users' tip

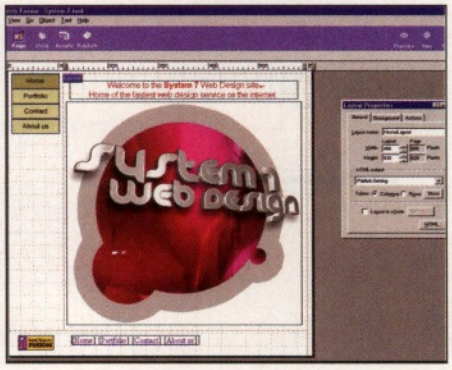

Setup
Directory Structure
HTML Output
Server Locations
Components
Output Type:
Nested Tables - All browsers
Browsers:
Netscape Navigator 2.x, 3.x and above, Microsoft Internet Explorer 2.x, 3.x and above, other browsers which support tables.
Description:
Uses complex hidden tables to achieve the highest level of layout accuracy across browsers.

IN MOST OTHER Web design packages, you have to use tables to lay out your page. While you can still use tables in NetObjects Fusion, there really is no need. When the site is finally published, the whole page is converted to tables anyway, which means that it can viewed in any browser.



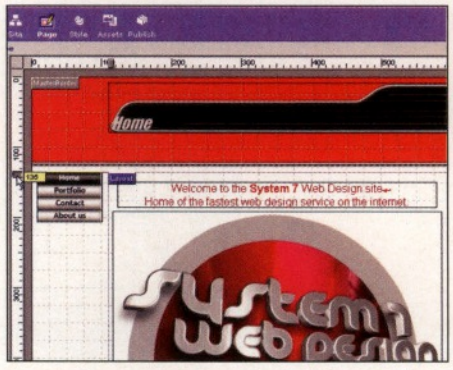
13 Adding an image

To add an image to the page, click the 'Picture' tool from the toolbar on the left-hand edge of the screen and draw a square. When you let go of the mouse, you will be prompted to browse for an image. Locate 'logo.jpg' from the cover CD.



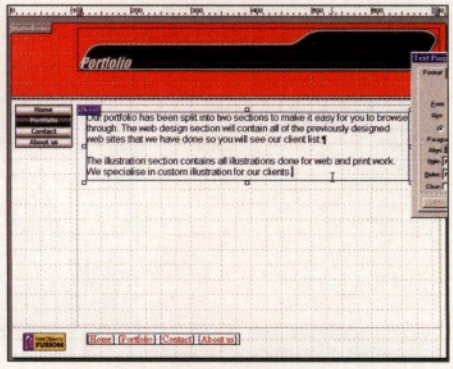
14 Reposition the image

Click the 'Open' button to add 'logo.jpg' to the picture box you have drawn. Now click on the image box and reposition the image so it's in line with the text. Remember you can use the cursor keys to move the image by one pixel in any direction.



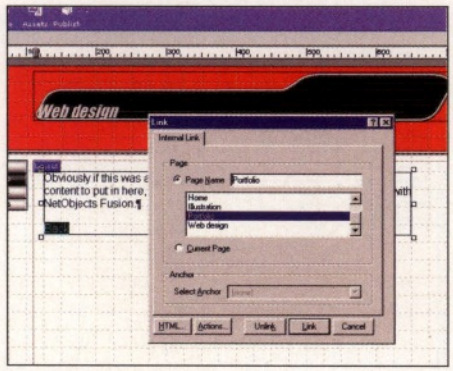
17 A little messy

On returning back to your page, things will look a little messy, but that's easy to change. There's a grey box in the ruler on the left-hand side of the screen. Click this and drag it to around 135 pixels to move the Master Borders of the design.



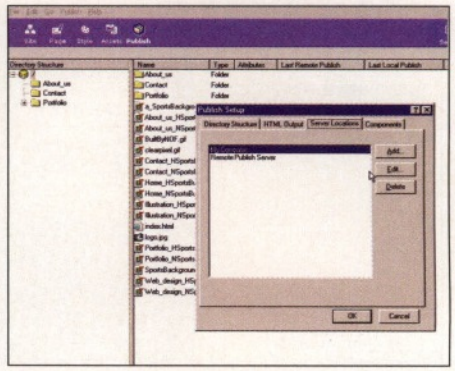
18 Back to the site

Click the 'Site' view and select the Portfolio page so that we can now edit that. Click back on the 'Page' view – you should now be editing the Portfolio page. Select the 'Text' tool to draw a text box and add some text to the page as before.



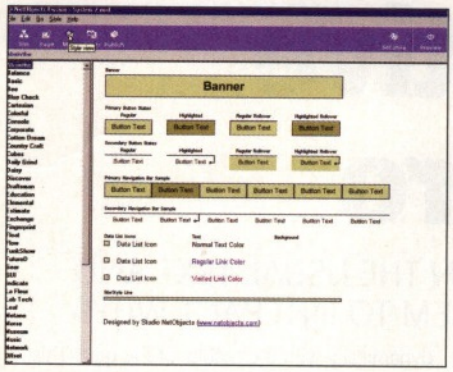
21 Navigate back

Make sure there is some 'back' text on the page – although there is the navigation system down the side, it's always handy to have some navigation on the page. Highlight the text and a link to the Portfolio page as we did in step 19.



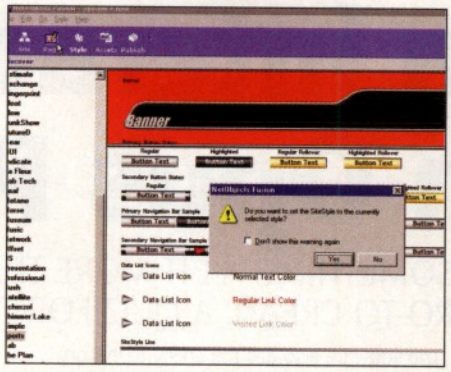
22 Publish your Web site

To publish your site, click the 'Publish' button on the top bar. A list of the assets used in your site are displayed on this screen. Now press the 'Setup' button to set where you want the site published to. Click on the 'Server locations' tab.



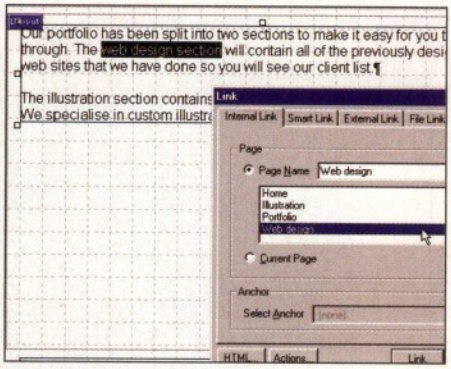
15 Site style

At the moment, the Web site looks a bit of a mish-mash of different styles, and the green buttons don't really go with the logo. Click on the 'Style' icon on the top bar and we will be able to select a better style.



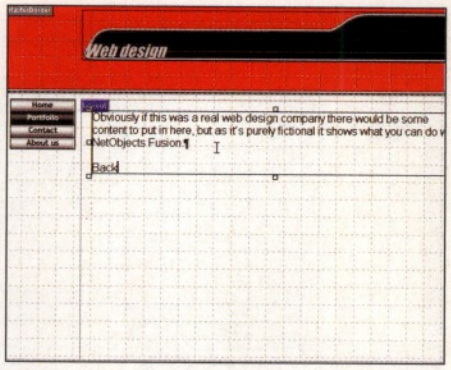
16 A lot more style

Browse down the list of categories on the left-hand side until you come to 'Sports'. Select this and then click back on the Page view. An alert box will appear asking if you want to change the style to the one that's currently selected – click 'Yes'.



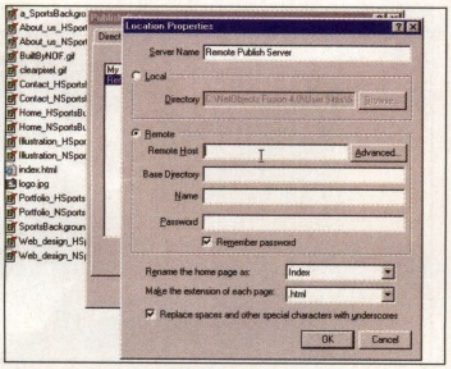
19 Change the navigation

Click the text section and highlight 'Web design section'. In the Properties palette, click 'Link' and scroll down and select 'Web design' in the pop-up window. Click the 'Link' button in the pop-up and repeat for the Illustration section.


Web design
Home
Portfolio
Contact
About us
Obviously if this was a real web design company there would be some content to put in here, but as it's purely fictional it shows what you can do w
NetObjects Fusion
Back

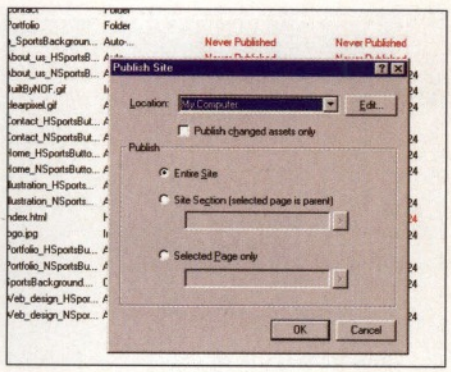
20 Web design

Go back to the Site view, select the 'Web design' file, and then go back to the Page view to edit the page. Once in the page, add some text to it. As this is a fictional Web design company, we're not going to put a list of URLs in here.



23 My Computer

Select the 'My Computer' option and click 'Edit'. In here you can specify exactly where you want to generate the HTML files on your local computer. If you select 'Remote Publish Server', you will need to fill in your Web server details.



24 Ready to Publish

Click 'OK' when you have entered the details and then 'OK' again to leave the Publish setup screen. Now hit the other 'Publish' button in the pop-up window, click 'OK' and your site will be displayed in your browser ready for you to see.

Web resources

The smart way to build Web sites!
NetObjects Fusion and NetObjects Matrix
FUSION 7
More than 250 SiteStyles now available on the Volume 1 CD

NetObjects

www.netobjects.com

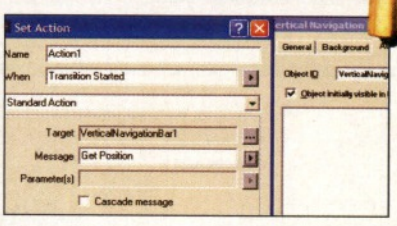
If you want information about NetObjects Fusion, what better place to go than the home page of NetObjects itself? Packed with information relating to all aspects of the program, it's well worth keeping tabs on this site just to see the latest developments.

Builder.com

www.builder.com

We never tire of recommending this site, mainly because it's the most complete one-stop resource for budding Web designers on the planet. You'll find everything you need for a rich and fulfiling Web design life here.

Power users' tip



NETOBJECTS FUSION 4 contains a fairly decent scripting section designed to give your buttons and page elements much more of a kick. Okay, it hardly compares to Flash or Director, where whole reams of options are available, but there's still enough to make a difference. You can access the scripting options of any object by clicking on it and selecting the 'Actions' tab in the Properties box. Once in here, you can apply a variety of actions, which will create all manner of effects to your object, including dragging, fading and so on.

In brief:
Task: Build a quiz for your site
Software I need: Illuminatus Opus Pro
Difficulty: Intermediate
Time I need: 1 hour

Practical internet IT'S ON THE CD

Create an interactive quiz with Opus Pro

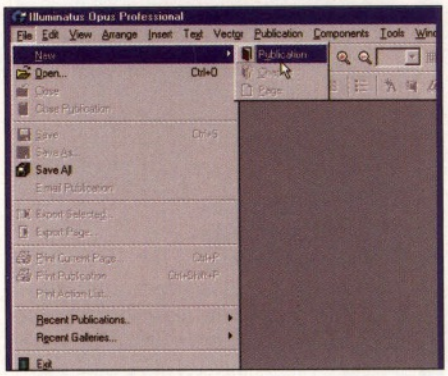
OFFER YOUR SITE'S VISITORS SOMETHING A BIT MORE THAN THE USUAL TEXT AND PICTURES FARE – USE OPUS PRO TO CREATE A QUIZ FOR THEM TO INTERACT WITH

CREATING MULTIMEDIA CONTENT can often be a little bit too complicated and time-consuming for the average home user. However, Opus Pro could change all that, as it provides all you need to start creating stunning work in no time at all.

Armed with Opus Pro, you can create animations, slideshows, quizzes – in fact, just about any small application you can dream up. The software also has the ability to import images, sounds, movies and Flash files.

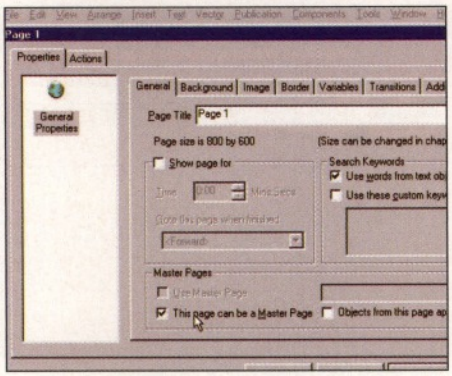
In this tutorial we're going to look at setting up a quiz using the built-in wizard. Unfortunately the quiz wizard doesn't quite do all the work, so we need to delve into the world of adding actions to objects. We will also create a results page for our quiz, which we will populate dynamically with the results of the quiz. This acts as an introduction into displaying variables.

When all of this is out of the way, we will publish the quiz as a self-running application that can be distributed via download on the Net, on floppy disk or on a CD. Opus Pro can publish to other formats as well, making it a great all-round multimedia production package.



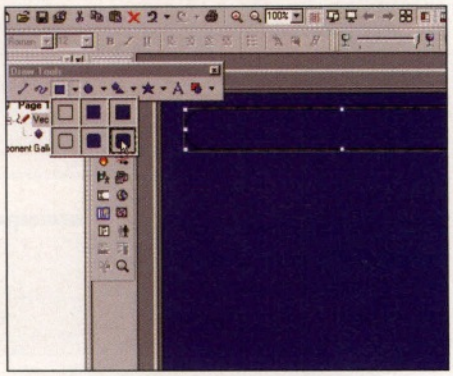
1 Starting up

Launch Opus Pro either from the shortcut on the desktop – which should have been created during installation – or through the Start menu. Click 'OK' on the tip of the day and then choose 'New' and 'Publication' from the 'File' menu.



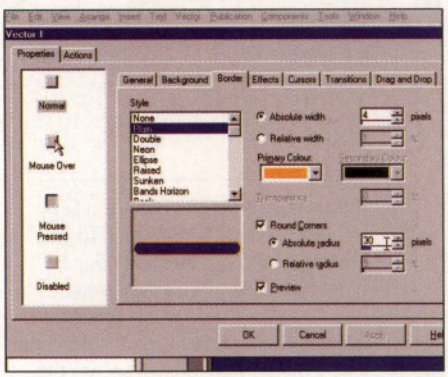
2 General Properties

'Page 1' will appear on your screen – double-click it to open the General Properties and select 'This page can be a Master Page'. Now click on 'Background', click the white coloured box and change this to the dark blue colour. Click 'OK'.



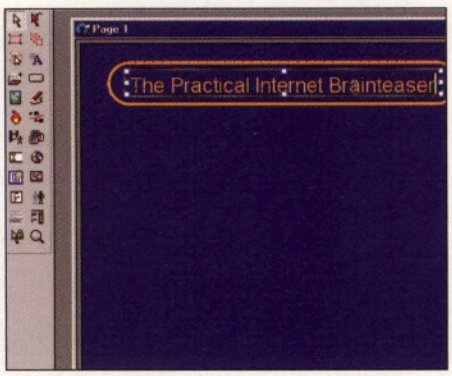
3 Create a rectangle

Now click on the 'Vector' tool from the toolbar. A new pop-up toolbar should appear, so select the arrow next to the Rectangle tool and choose the 'Rounded rectangle' tool from the drop-down menu. Draw a rectangle on the page.



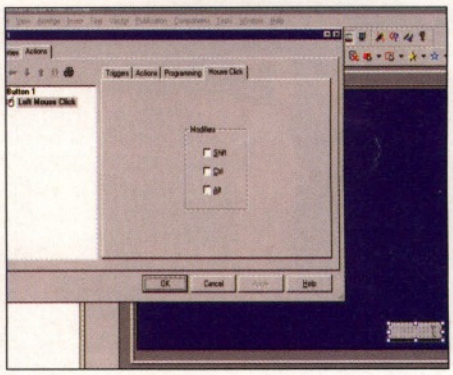
4 Edit rectangle

Double-click the rectangle and click on the 'Border' option. Under 'Style', choose 'Plain', click on 'Primary Colour' and in the drop list of colours, choose 'Custom'. Pick an orange colour then amend the round corners to a radius of '30'.



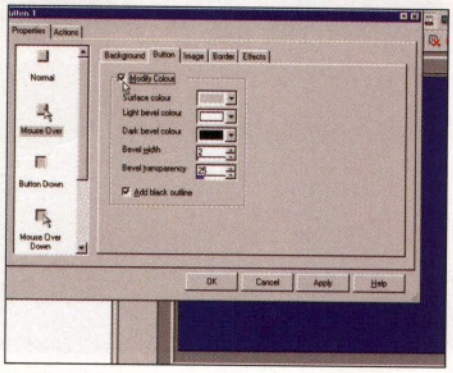
5 Type tool

Click on the 'Type' tool and add a heading inside your rounded rectangle. We've made the font the same orange as the border using the colours on the right-hand side of the screen. You may want to enlarge and change the font.



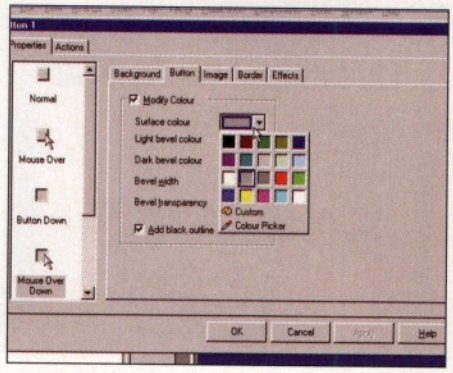
6 View the document

In the centre of the top toolbar is a number, which should be '100%'. Change this to '65%' so you can see more of the screen. Click the 'Button' tool and draw a button in the bottom-right of the screen. A pop-up window should open.



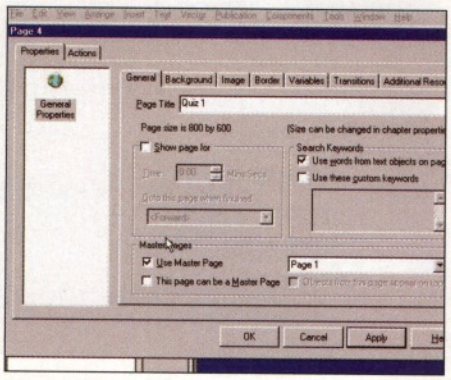
7 Action time

Click the 'Actions' tab in the pop-up window and click the 'Exit' symbol, and then 'Properties'. You'll see the Normal state of the mouse. When you click on the Mouse Over button, a pop-up window will appear but dismiss this. Click 'Modify colour'.



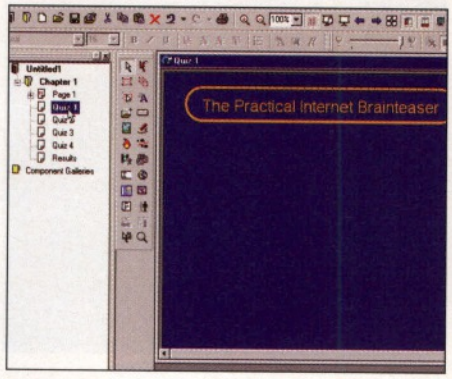
8 Surface colour

Click the 'Surface colour', change it from a light grey to a darker grey and hit 'Apply'. Repeat for the Button Down and Mouse Over Down states and click 'OK'. Click inside the button, then add an 'exit' label to make this an exit button to the quiz.



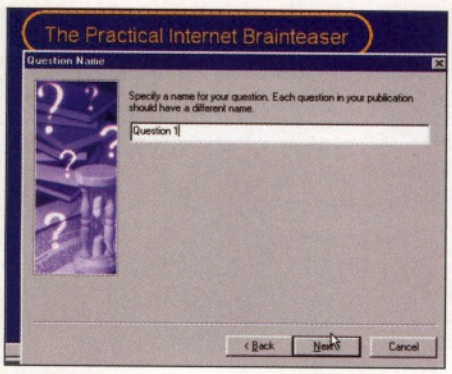
9 A new page

Click on the 'Page' icon just under the menu bar. If Opus Pro asks if you would like to use your Master Page to create the new one, click 'Yes'. If not, double-click the page and call it 'Quiz 1'. Under Master Pages, tick 'Use Master Page'.



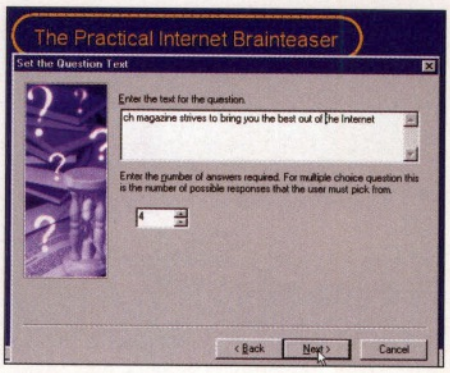
10 Repeat it

Repeat the last step four more times, naming the pages 'Quiz 2', 'Quiz 3', 'Quiz 4' and 'Results'. Each time, be sure to base the page on the master page. When you have completed all four pages, double-click on 'Quiz 1' in the Objects panel.


The Practical Internet Brainteaser
Question Name
Specify a name for your question. Each question in your publication should have a different name.
Question 1
< Back
Next >
Cancel

11 Questions, questions

Go to the 'Question Wizard' icon and click it. You'll be prompted to add a new question, so click 'Next'. Choose 'Multiple choice question' as the Question Type and then click 'Next'. You have to name your question, so call it 'Question 1'.


The Practical Internet Brainteaser
Set the Question Text
Enter the text for the question.
ch magazine strives to bring you the best out of the Internet
Enter the number of answers required. For multiple choice question this is the number of possible responses that the user must pick from.
4
< Back
Next >
Cancel

12 Next please

Click 'Next' again to see a choice of layouts. Scroll down the list until you see the option for Blue Multi, select this and press 'Next'. Now type your question in the text field. You can also choose how many answers to give.

Jargon buster

Actions

Actions give interactivity to buttons, and without them, nothing would happen. The quiz wizard automatically puts the score on the buttons but they still have to move forward to the next page. The trigger is when the action takes place.

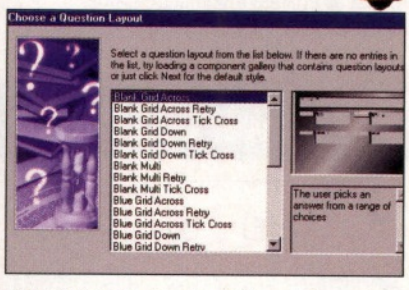
Insert variable

A variable is like a container that can hold many different types of drinks. The variable in our quiz is 'score'. When we are inserting a variable into the text box, what we are actually doing is displaying the number of correct answers and the total number of answers, which is going to be different each time someone plays the quiz.

Publish

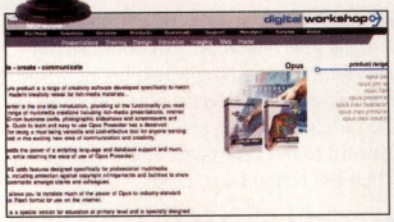
This is where you package the graphics and scripting so the quiz becomes a standalone file that can be run without the user having Opus Pro. This makes the software ideal for creating CD-ROMs and other programs. You can also publish to the Web to create an online version of your publication, however a special plug-in will be required. Finally you can also make a screen saver, though this is better suited to animations.

Power users' tip


Choose a Question Layout
Select a question layout from the list below. If there are no entries in the list, try loading a component gallery that contains question layouts or just click Next for the default style.
Blank Grid Across
Blank Grid Across Retry
Blank Grid Across Tick Cross
Blank Grid Down
Blank Grid Down Retry
Blank Grid Down Tick Cross
Blank Multi
Blank Multi Retry
Blank Multi Tick Cross
Blue Grid Across
Blue Grid Across Retry
Blue Grid Across Tick Cross
Blue Grid Down
Blue Grid Down Retry
The user picks an answer from a range of choices

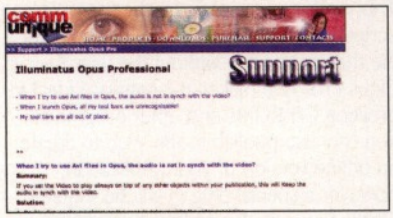
TAKE TIME TO check out the number of different layouts that are available inside the Quiz Wizard – you may discover the perfect style for the type of quiz you have in mind. If you want to create your own quiz, double-click on each of the objects that make up the quiz and change their properties to suit your needs. If you want to go one step further, have a look at all the actions and scripting assigned to each object and attempt to create your own – but that's not for the faint of heart.

Web resources



Digital Workshop
www.digitalworkshop.com/dw_shop/products/opus/index.shtml

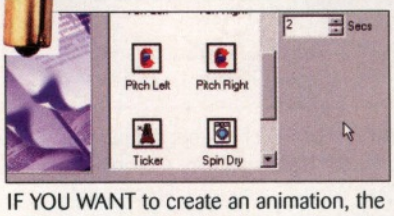
From the company that created Illuminatus Opus Pro, there's a range of materials here to help you including tutorials, FAQs and forums so you can learn from other users. If you become a member, you'll receive a benefits package, including 10% off software purchases.



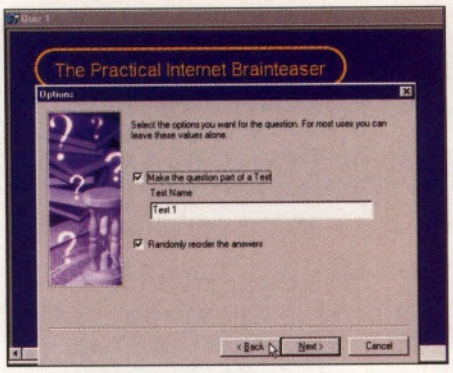
comm-unique
www.comm-unique.co.nz/web/products/opuspro/opuspro-support/opuspro-support.html

This site has a range of FAQs for various pieces of software such as Paint Shop Pro and Opus Pro. While the Opus Pro section is limited at the moment, that could all change if you start asking questions, as they'll have to be answered!

Power users' tip

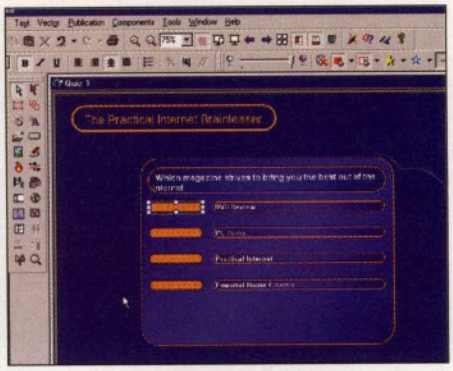


IF YOU WANT to create an animation, the Animation Wizard will guide you through the process. If you want to animate along a path, you need to create an animation path with the appropriate tool from the toolbar. If you want to spin an object you get a whole series of spins and effects. When you have clicked Finish, you can then apply a trigger to tell the animation when to begin.


The Practical Internet Brainteaser
Options
Select the options you want for the question. For most uses you can leave these values alone.
Make the question part of a Test
Test Name
Test 1
Randomly reorder the answers
< Back
Next >
Cancel

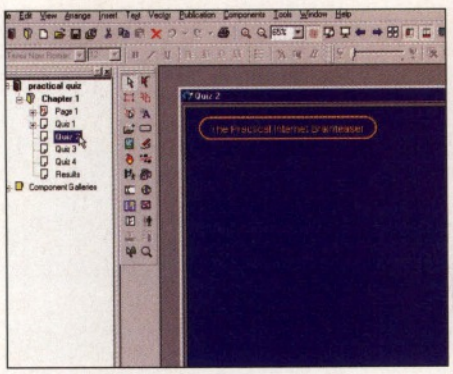
13 Answers on a postcard

Click 'Next' and fill in your answers. Give a '0' score for all the wrong answers and '1' for the right answers, then click 'Next'. Choose 'Make the question part of a Test' and 'Randomly reorder the answers', and then click 'Next' and 'Finish'.



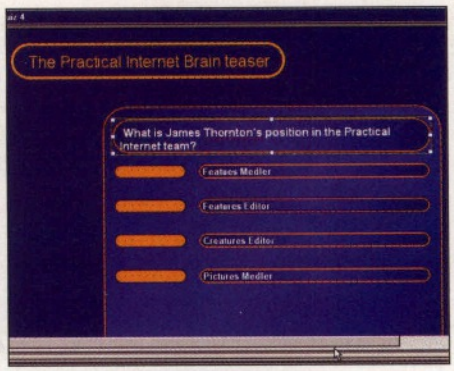
14 Reposition on screen

You may need to zoom out to 65% again – when you do you will notice that a quiz appears in the top-left corner. Pick this up and centre it horizontally and vertically. Select the first answer button and double-click to bring up the properties.



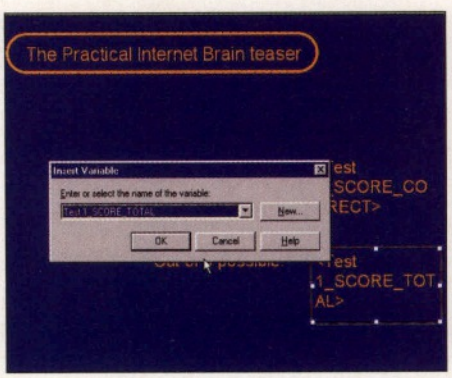
17 Quiz 2

We've finished Quiz 1, so save the document. Now double-click on 'Quiz 2' in the Objects panel. The blank page should appear, and all you have to do is repeat steps 11 to 16 for this page and the other two remaining pages.



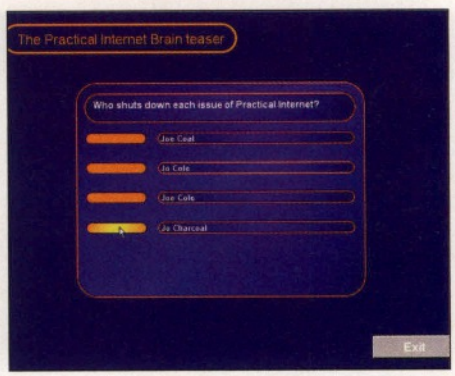
18 Question numbers

As you create the questions, you need to give a unique name to each, so we've called them question 2, 3 and 4. Make sure that with each button you apply a forward page action, otherwise your quiz won't move on from page to page.



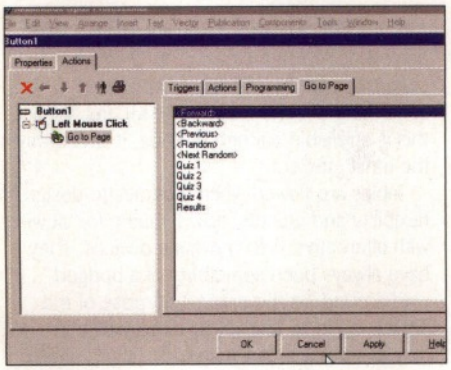
21 Another blank text box

You can format the text of this box if you want to. Draw another text box, left-click it and then right-click, selecting 'Insert Variable'. This time, select 'Test1_SCORE_TOTAL' and then press 'OK'. We have now finished building the quiz.



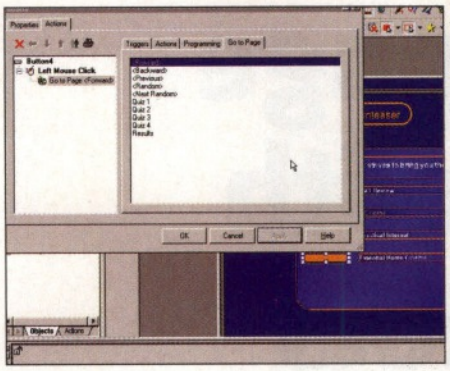
22 Testing

Now we need to check the quiz to make sure it works correctly. On the top row of icons is a symbol that looks like a projector screen. Click this to test the file. A pop-up warning should appear but it isn't applicable, as we've made an exit button.



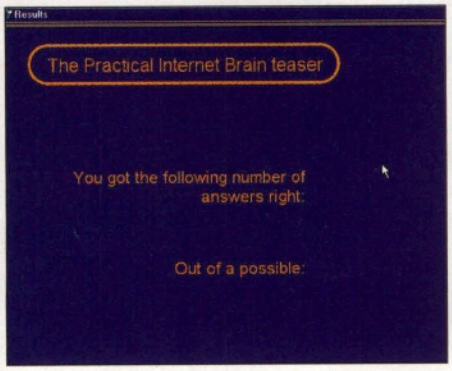
15 Get in on the action

Click the 'Action' tab at the top of the pop-up, double-click 'Left Mouse Click' for a trigger and then click the other Action tab next to that. In the list of actions, double-click 'Go To Page'. A list will be available – choose '<Forward>', 'Apply' and 'OK'.



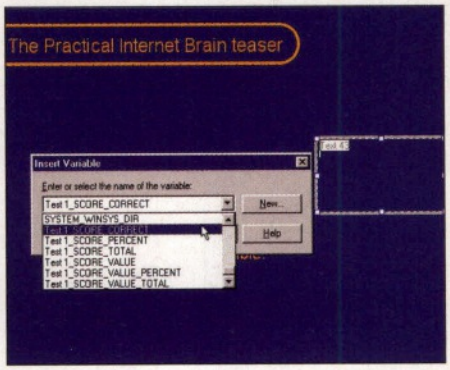
16 Once again

You need to double-click on each of the remaining three buttons in turn and give them a 'Left Mouse Click' trigger with 'Go to Page' action, choosing 'Forward' as the way to go. Click 'Apply' and 'OK' to attach the action to each in turn.



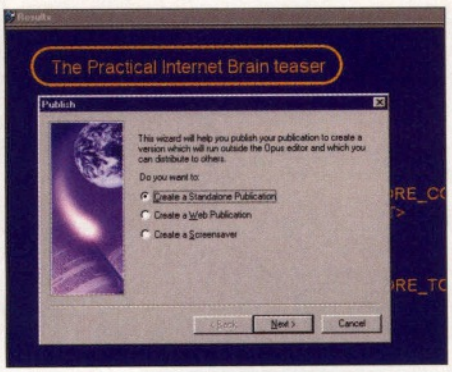
19 Build the results

Double-click on the 'Results' page and use the 'Text' tool to draw a text box on the screen and fill it with text as shown. Underneath that, create another text box and copy the message shown in the screenshot above into the box.



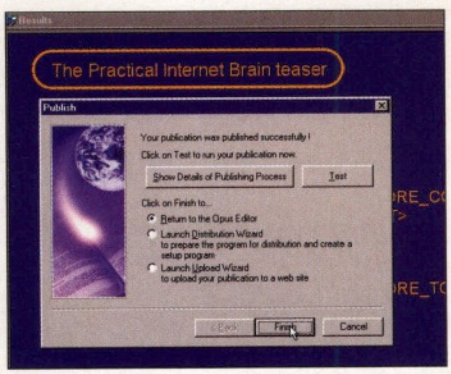
20 Create blank text

Create a text box to the right of your first one. Left-click the text box and then right-click it. Select 'Insert Variable' from the drop menu. In the pop-up window, scroll down the list and select 'Test1_SCORE_CORRECT' and click 'OK'.


The Practical Internet Brain teaser
Publish
This wizard will help you publish your publication to create a version which will run outside the Opus editor and which you can distribute to others.
Do you want to:
Create a Standalone Publication
Create a Web Publication
Create a Screensaver
Next >
Cancel

23 Create a publication

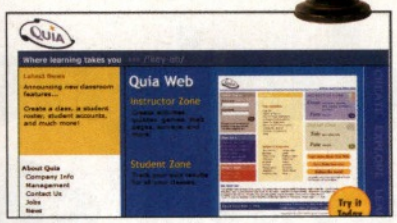
If all is finished, it's time to publish the quiz. Go to the 'Publication' menu and choose 'Publish'. In the pop-up window create a standalone player – you could choose to create a Web publication but it requires a plug-in to work. Click 'Next'.


The Practical Internet Brain teaser
Publish
Your publication was published successfully!
Click on Test to run your publication now.
Show Details of Publishing Process
Test
Click on Finish to...
Return to the Opus Editor
Launch Distribution Wizard to prepare the program for distribution and create a setup program
Launch Upload Wizard to upload your publication to a web site
Finish
Cancel

24 Publish

Choose a location and name for your quiz to be saved and click 'Next'. The next page shows the settings, which don't need to be changed, so click 'Next'. Click the 'Finish' button and then launch your quiz from your hard drive.

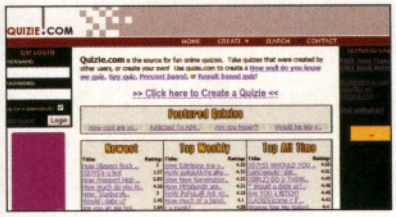
Web resources



Quia

www.quia.com

Okay, so there's a fair chance that you don't have any real need to visit algebra quiz sites very often, but this site does demonstrate the kind of results you can achieve with programs like Opus.

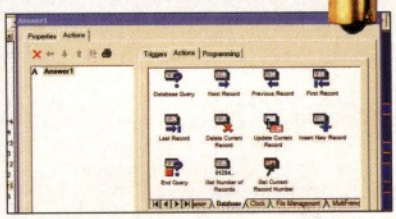


Quizie

www.quizie.com

If you can't be bothered to buy or even download software for creating your own quiz, then this is the perfect site for you. Simply type in your questions, then tell the site how they should affect the results – it's all so easy.

Power users' tip



DOUBLE-CLICK ON any item in your project to be presented with the 'Properties' box. The 'Actions' tab gives you a list of options designed to let you apply a variety of add-ons to your objects. This section is split into three parts, allowing you to decide what should trigger the event, what the action should be associated to it, and any programming or scripting you decide to attempt yourself. As you can imagine, the Actions section is by far the most important of these, and gives you a number of events to add to your projects

In brief:
Task: Structure page design with CSS instead of tables
Software I need: None
Difficulty: Intermediate
Time I need: 45 minutes

Column page designs with style sheets

COLUMNS ARE NORMALLY DESIGNED WITH TABLES, BUT CSS ARE A GREAT ALTERNATIVE

ASK A TYPICAL Webmaster to create a Web page with a design based around rows and columns, and they'll probably produce something using the TABLE HTML tag. While this is a reliable enough method, it isn't always the most efficient.

Tables are flawed when it comes to design flexibility and graceful downgrading for viewing with alternative Web browsing devices. They have always been something of a bodged workaround, as the original purpose of the TABLE tag in HTML was to display data in tabular format rather than to structure entire pages. This remains evident today in the way that many browsers are sluggish to display complicated table designs.

The point of this character assassination on the TABLE tag is to underline the point made in the last issue of *PI* with our navigation bar

```
body {
  background: #000066;
  }

.holder {
  width:800px;
  padding:0px;
  margin:10px;
  }
```

1 Start the style sheet

The style code here sets up the page background colour and creates a custom style class called 'holder' that is used to enclose the various columns and ensure they don't get moved from their intended positions even if the site visitor resizes their browser window .

```
.title,.narrow,.wide {
  float: left;
  border: 1px solid #660000;
  background: white;
  margin: 5px;
  padding: 2px;
  }
```

2 Triple class definition

Multiple classes can be defined at once using the comma-separated notation shown above. The three classes here represent the different types of content boxes for the page: the title box, the narrow column, and the wide column. Their in-common design features are shown here.

```
<html><head>
    <title>three column layout in css</title>
    <link rel="stylesheet" type="text/css"
    href="columns.css">
</head><body>

<div class="holder">
    <div class="title">
    <h1>This is the page headline using the H1
    headline tag</h1>
    </div>
</div><br clear=all>
```

5 Switching to HTML

Now to the HTML file and its contents. After the essential LINK to the style sheet, we plunge into the DIV structure. As the title covers the whole width of the window, it has a 'holder' DIV of its own. For TABLE tag devotees, the 'holder' is like the TR tag and the inner DIVs like TD tag(s).

```
<div class="holder">

    <div class="narrow">First column</div>

    <div class="wide">Second column</div>

    <div class="narrow" style="position:
    fixed">Third column</div>

</div><br clear=all>
</body></html>
```

6 Main content structure

This HTML code lays down the main page structure, with two narrow columns surrounding the main one on the page. The STYLE property is optional but has an interesting effect: it fixes the column in position regardless of vertical scrolling.

workshop: it's all too easy to forget what can be achieved using just Cascading Style Sheets (CSS). These are a very powerful tool which can replace the use of tables to make structured Web page designs. By making the switch to CSS coded navigation you'll save on download time as well as effectively increasing the compatibility of your page with outdated browsers and users who don't access the Web with conventional software.

Style sheet 101

For the benefit of readers not familiar with the ins and outs of style sheets, here is a quick outline. Although by no means universally applied, style sheets are an integral part of the official standards for making Web pages, and have been for several years. All Web pages are supposed to be designed along the lines of HTML code providing the structure and content of the page, with CSS determining its visual appearance by either redefining the default appearances of HTML tags or creating new style identities.

By making a style sheet and applying it to all the HTML pages in your site, you can vastly reduce the design time for any Web project, as well as making it possible to change the look of a whole site by just tweaking the style sheet file. In this example, the visual appearance of the page is determined entirely by the style code, allowing changes to be made just altering the style sheet code once. In this example, we're going to create a page with a three-column design, featuring a headline that spans all three columns at the top of the page. The code that's featured in the first four steps forms part of the style sheet file we'll call 'columns.css'. This should be saved into the same folder on your hard drive as the HTML file created in step five.

Jargon buster

Padding and margins

Padding is empty space around the edge of something like text or an image, but still within any border defined for that item. A margin is empty space outside the item's border.

Class

This is a type of style sheet item which is created afresh and identified by a name of the designer's choosing. Class names are prefixed by a full stop symbol in the style sheet but this is omitted when calling the class as part of a DIV tag property, eg

```
.title {
  width: 100%;
  margin: 0px;
  }

.narrow {
  width: 20%;
  font-size: 90%;
  }

.wide {
  width: 50%;
  }
```

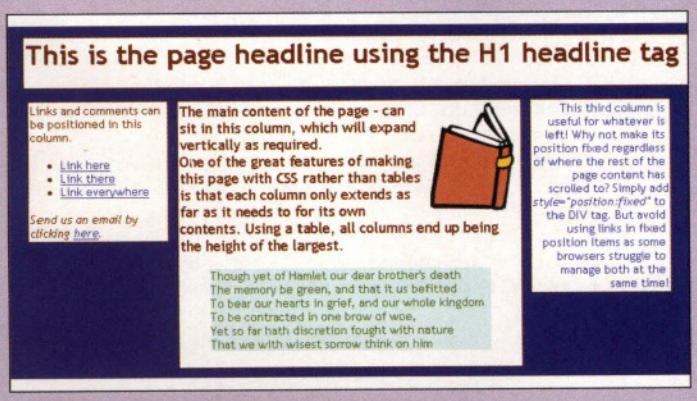
3 Contrasting content classes

Following the joint definition in step two, the three different types of content box class have their unique identities specified here. The percentage widths will relate to the width of the HOLDER class in which the content boxes will be positioned, rather than the width of the page.

```
DIV {
  font-family: Trebuchet MS, Verdana, sans;
  font-size: 103%;
  color: #660000;
  }
```

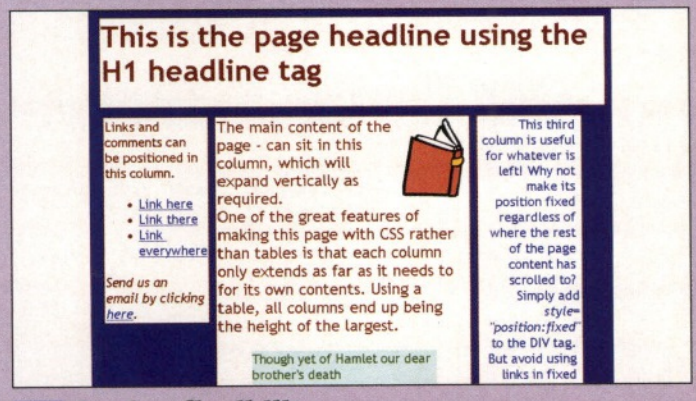
4 Font style appearance

All of the page's text will be displayed within the DIV tag, which makes it easy to define our default text appearance. The font size percentage relates to the site visitor's browser setting, making the style sheet friendly towards visitors who choose to have a different font size from 'normal' for whatever reason.


This is the page headline using the H1 headline tag
Links and comments can be positioned in this column.
Link here
Link there
Link everywhere
Send us an email by clicking here.
The main content of the page - can sit in this column, which will expand vertically as required.
One of the great features of making this page with CSS rather than tables is that each column only extends as far as it needs to for its own contents. Using a table, all columns end up being the height of the largest.
Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death
The memory be green, and that it us befitted
To bear our hearts in grief, and our whole kingdom
To be contracted in one brow of woe,
Yet so far hath discretion fought with nature
That we with wisest sorrow think on him
This third column is useful for whatever is left! Why not make its position fixed regardless of where the rest of the page content has scrolled to? Simply add style="position:fixed" to the DIV tag. But avoid using links in fixed position items as some browsers struggle to manage both at the same time!

7 Finished page

This screenshot shows what the page looks like – we've added a little text to bulk out the page and show how it appears when a bit more populated than the structural code examples quoted in this tutorial. You can see this online and download the code from **www.bright-choice.co.uk/columns.html**.


This is the page headline using the H1 headline tag
Links and comments can be positioned in this column.
Link here
Link there
Link everywhere
Send us an email by clicking here.
The main content of the page - can sit in this column, which will expand vertically as required.
One of the great features of making this page with CSS rather than tables is that each column only extends as far as it needs to for its own contents. Using a table, all columns end up being the height of the largest.
Though yet of Hamlet our dear brother's death
This third column is useful for whatever is left! Why not make its position fixed regardless of where the rest of the page content has scrolled to? Simply add style="position:fixed" to the DIV tag. But avoid using links in fixed

8 Design flexibility

When the browser's text size setting is altered, the page looks like this. The page has expanded vertically to cope with the extra space required. This shows that the style sheet design is both flexible to different users' needs and resilient in terms of showing what the designer intended.

In brief:
Task: Create an eCommerce product catalogue
Software I need: Notepad, IE4+ or NS4+, and a server that supports MySQL and PHP
Difficulty: Advanced
Time I need: 60 minutes

PART ONE

Create an online catalogue with PHP and MySQL

TAKE THE FIRST TENTATIVE STEPS INTO THE WORLD OF ECOMMERCE, AS WE TACKLE CREATING A PRODUCT CATALOGUE WITH A COMBINATION OF PHP AND MYSQL

CREATING AN ECOMMERCE site isn't something to be sniffed at. Before you even get to such concerns as credit card transactions and secure servers, you need to figure out how you're going to present product information to prospective clients.

We aim to help you in this task, with our three-part guide to creating an eCommerce product catalogue. The script below executes with the 'front-end' of an eCommerce application, allowing the user to browse a list of products by type. Next issue we'll be dealing with creating a shopping trolley, allowing the user to add products, delete products, and then proceed to our virtual check-out. The following issue, we'll be showing you how to create a script maintaining the catalogue; adding new products, deleting old products, and monitoring stock levels.

```
create database catalogue;
use catalogue;
create table types (
    typeid int unsigned not null auto_increment
    primary key,
    name char(30) not null,
    description text not null );
create table products (
    productid int unsigned not null auto_incre-
    ment primary key,
    type int unsigned not null,
    name char(50) not null,
    description text not null,
    price float(4,2) not null,
    image int unsigned not null );
```

1 Create the database

Before we do anything else, we'll create our database. Create a text file named catalogue.sql and save it in the root directory. We have two tables in our database, the first containing information about the type of products we have in our catalogue, and the other containing the products themselves.

```
insert into types values
    ( NULL, "Science Fiction", "Our selection of
    Science Fiction takes you through time, space and
    imagination."),
    ( NULL, "Fiction", "From historical novels to
    murder mystery, we have a broad selection of
    general fiction for anyone's tastes."),
    ( NULL, "Horror", "Tremble and shake as you
    browse through our large selection of horror and
    thriller novels.");
insert into products values
    ( NULL, 2, "The Gormenghast Trilogy", "The tales
    of Gormanghast will fill your dreams and give
    you an new insight into the world around you.",
    15.99, 1),
    ( NULL, 3, "Dracula", "Bramstoker's masterpiece
    tracks the rise and fall of the fell vampire
    prince, Dracula.", 4.00, 0),
    ( NULL, 1, "The Time Machine", "H G Wells takes
    us on the trip back and forth through the annals
    of time in the Time Machine.", 5.99, 1);
```

2 Insert the data

The first 'insert' deals with the product types, while the second inserts the product information. Save catalogue.sql, then go to the mysql/bin directory from the command prompt, and type 'mysql < C:\catalogue.sql' (exchanging C for the root directory where appropriate).

```
    for ($a = 0; $a < mysql_num_rows($types_rs); $a++)
    {
      $types = mysql_fetch_array($types_rs);
      $products_rs = mysql_query("select products.pro-
    ductid from products, types where products.type =
    ".$types["typeid"]);
      if (mysql_num_rows($products_rs)) {
            echo "<p><b>".$types["name"]."</b><br>";
            echo $types["description"]."<br>";
            echo "<a
    href='products.php?type=".$types["typeid"]."'>View
    products</a></p>"; } } ?>
Click <a href='products.php?type=all'>here</a> to view
    the entire catalogue.
</body></html>
```

5 Display the types

This is where we display the various product types, along with the description of each type. We also give the user the option of viewing all the products, irrespective of type. But before we do this, we make sure that each product type has products associated with it. If not, we don't display that type.

```
<html><head><title>Product
    Catalogue</title></head><body>
<p> Below you will find a list of products.
    Click on Add to Trolley to add the product
    to your shopping trolley.</p>
<?  @ $db = mysql_pconnect();
if (!db) { echo "<p style='color:blue;'>There
    has been an error connecting to the data-
    base. Please try again later, or contact the
    <a href='admin@youremail.com'>administra-
    tor</a>.</p></body></html>"; exit; }
```

6 List the product

Now we create a new file named products.php. This is the page that will display a list of the products requested by the user, along with their details and an image (where appropriate). Before we do that, however, we need to create an MySQL connection (outputting an error message if this is not successful).

We're going to use PHP and MySQL to drive our product catalogue. Both of these products are free to download, and are widely supported by Web hosts and Web servers. You can download PHP and MySQL from **www.php.net** and **www.mysql.com**.

Your scripting friends

PHP is a server-side scripting language that is extremely versatile and powerful. One of its strengths is the ease with which it can access, manipulate, and change data. In recent times, it has become one of the most popular scripting languages for database applications.

MySQL allows you to create relational databases that are simple, effective and easily accessible using PHP. It also allows you to use SQL queries, which makes everyone's lives a whole lot easier.

This first tutorial is reasonably straightforward. It allows you to create a catalogue of products and an interface in which to view them. These products will be sorted by type, and each type will have a short description of the products.

Because we won't be dealing with catalogue maintenance this month, you'll have to input product information by hand. This means accessing MySQL and typing in the data you want to have in your product database. You do this using the insert into [table] values query (where [table] is the name of the database; in this case catalogue), followed by the values, enclosed in brackets and separated by commas. It's a good idea to take a look at the various columns in the products table, so you know what values are required. You can do this by typing describe products; into the MySQL command prompt (after typing use catalogue; of course).

Jargon buster

Command Prompt

The Command Prompt is where you can enter commands directly into your Operating System.

Query

Queries are used in SQL to retrieve, update, delete (and do anything else you might want) to the database you are working with. They usually come in the form of a string of text, which contains a series of commands. In SQL, these commands are reasonably intuitive and make manipulating data remarkably easy and efficient. This is what has made SQL such a popular database language.

```
<html><head><title>Product
    Catalogue</title></head><body>
<p> Welcome to our product catalogue. Below you
    will find a list of the type of products we
    have in stock. Please browse through this
    list, or select "View all" to view our
    entire range of products.       </p>
<?  @ $db = mysql_pconnect();
    if (!db) { echo "<p
    style=' color:blue;' >There has been an error
    connecting to the database. Please try again
    later, or contact the <a href=' admin@youre-
    mail.com' >administrator</a>.</p></body></html
    >"; exit; }
```

3 Listing the product types

This is the first part of our script. Create a text file, and save it as catalogue.php. Once we get the standard HTML out of the way, this part of the script attempts to create a connection to the MySQL server. If this is not possible, it outputs an error message.

```
    mysql_select_db("catalogue");
    $types_rs = mysql_query("select * from
    types");
    if (!mysql_num_rows($types_rs)) { echo "<p
    style=' color:blue;' >Sorry, but we have no
    items in stock. Please try again
    later.</p>"; exit; }
```

4 Connect to the database

Now we connect to the catalogue database, and run our first query. This query merely requests all the data from the types database. Although it's unlikely that our database is going to be completely empty, we'll need to cover every eventuality with an error message if no data is found.

```
    mysql_select_db("catalogue");
    if ($HTTP_GET_VARS[ "type"]  == "all") {
      $products_rs = mysql_query("select * from
    products"); }
    else {
$products_rs = mysql_query("select * from prod-
    ucts where type =
    '".$HTTP_GET_VARS[ "type"] ."' "); }
if (!mysql_num_rows($products_rs)) { echo "<p
    style=' color:blue;' >Sorry, but we have no
    products of this type in stock. Please try
    again later.</p>"; exit; }
```

7 Get the product data

Once we've accessed MySQL, we use the catalogue database. Then we check $HTTP_GET_VARS["type"] to see what type of products the user wishes to view. If it equals 'all', we'll list all of the products. We then check to see if there actually are any products of this type.

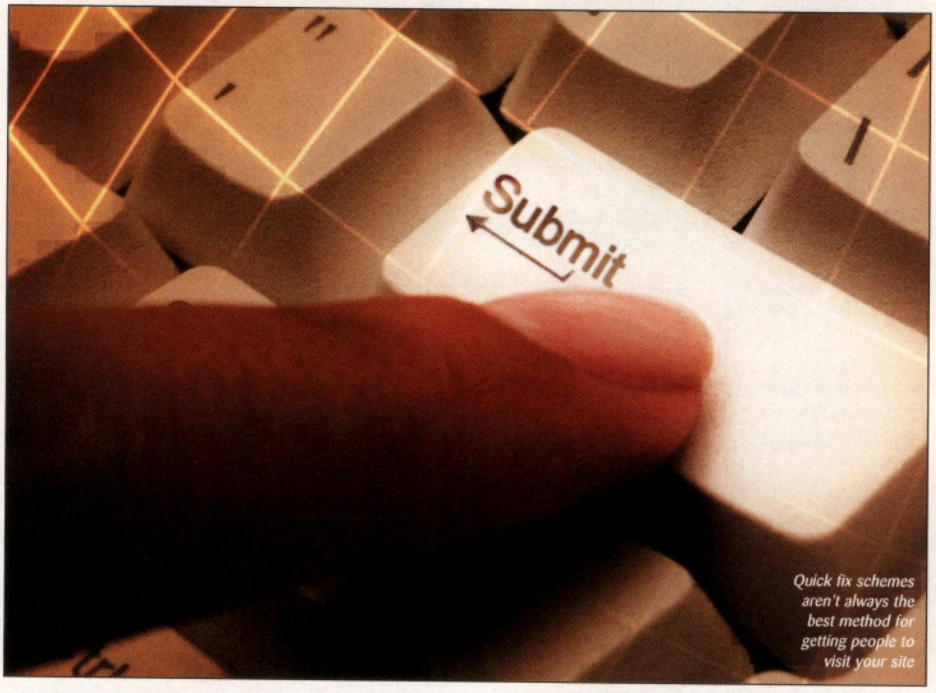
```
    for ($a = 0; $a < mysql_num_rows($products_rs);
    $a++) {
      $products = mysql_fetch_array($products_rs);
      echo "<hr><table><tr valign=' top' >";
      if ($products[ "image"] ) {
            echo "<td width=10%><img src=' prod-
    ucts/".$products[ "productid"] .".jpg'  align=' abs-
    bottom' ></td>"; }
      echo "<td><b>".$products[ "name"] ."</b><br>";
      echo $products[ "description"] ."<br>";
      echo "Price: £".$products[ "price"] ."<br>";
      echo "<a href=' trolley.php?action=add&prod-
    uct=".$products[ "productid"] ."' >Add to Shopping
    Trolley</a></p></td></tr></table>"; } ?>
<hr><p><a href=' catalogue.php' >Back to
    catalogue</a></p>
</body></html>
```

8 Display the product data

Last, but not least, we list the products. For each product, we'll list the name, description, price, and show an image if there is one. We've also put a link in here to allow users to add this item to the 'shopping trolley'. Next month we'll take a look at how to create a shopping trolley.

Q&A
Webmaster Q&A

JAMES SEABRIGHT ANSWERS YOUR WEB SITE BUILDING QUERIES. EMAIL HIM AT **HELPDESK@PARAGON.CO.UK**



Quick fix schemes aren't always the best method for getting people to visit your site

Submission sharks

Q I just built my site and I was thinking about getting it submitted at www.valuesubmit.com. Is it worth it? Do you know if it's reputable?

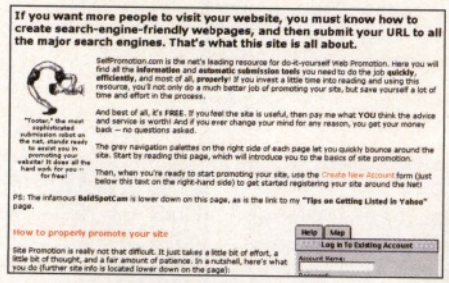
Allan Duende

A **There are thousands of submission services on the Net, so it is no surprise that I haven't heard of this particular one until now. That said, there are a few simple things about the service which instantly suggests it is not the right place to spend money on promoting your site.**

For a start, the company seems obsessed with the notion that submitting your URL to "350,000 Free For All links pages" is a service that is worth paying money for. It most certainly is not – FFA pages are designed to be free and there are plenty of sites that will help you submit to them without spending any cash, including www.cmather.com. However, FFA sites aren't all that wonderful, as they tend to generate ten times more junk email than they do improvements in search engine ranking. They don't really encourage the anarchic sharing of favourite links any more either.

Instead, they are plagued by automated submission services adding pages in the hope that any link will improve the search engine positioning of the destination Web page. As search systems become more sophisticated, this old trick becomes less and less effective.

If you look at the differences between the packages on offer at Value Submit, you'll see that they generally amount to nothing more than the same service repeated weekly for a few months or a year. This will not help you in the search engine stakes, as no engine I know of will prioritise sites as a result of being pestered on a weekly basis.

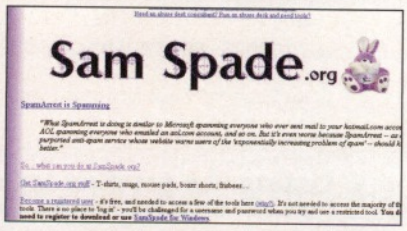

If you want more people to visit your website, you must know how to create search-engine-friendly webpages, and then submit your URL to all the major search engines. That's what this site is all about.
How to properly promote your site
Help
Map
Log In To Existing Account

*A modest donation to the running costs of **www.selfpromotion.com** will allow you to get the most out of the site's many services*

But the most fundamental problem with ValueSubmit is that it does not ask its users enough questions about whether their site is ready to be promoted. This is by far the most important issue in Web promotion – your site has to be search engine friendly and above all user friendly. I've plugged this site before and I'll plug it again, because it remains the best single resource on the Net in the field of Web promotion: www.selfpromotion.com.

*Don't fork out cash to submit your site to search engines and other promotional sites, head straight to **www.cmather.com** and let this free service loose on your URL*

Reader's tip



Keeping tabs on site visitors

I'M QUITE NEUROTIC when it comes to my site's visitor logs and sometimes like to check up on where my most enthusiastic visitors are based, by taking the details of their Net addresses from my site logs and checking them out. This is not that easy a task using the standard features of a Windows PC or Mac, because neither have particularly good built-in network investigation tools. Thankfully I've discovered a really nifty Web site that lets you do all the sniffing around you like online, including complicated scans like reverse DNS lookups, packet traces, Whois enquiries and various others, too. I'd be grateful if you could share this site address with other readers, as I'm sure it would help them – it is **www.samspade.org**. They may also want to check out the less comprehensive but reliable range of tools at **www.demon.net/external**.

Julia Mathias

Crazy frames

Q I found your answers in frame forwarding and frame removal in the February issue extremely helpful, and will move my Web site to solve the forwarding problem. However, I would really like to keep frame navigation. So could I become more search engine friendly by adding a plain welcome home page (which I name index.htm) with say an enter button which then takes you to the frameset? This way, I'd be pushing the frames deeper into the site. And of course I'd insert appropriate meta tags on the new welcome page.

William Richards

A **May I lend you a shovel? What you describe is only likely to worsen the already disastrous impact that a frame-based design will have on your search engine position and accessibility to users of non-conventional Web browsers. And all users will be inconvenienced by any 'improvement' which pushes the actual content of the site away from the first page seen by the visitor. As for meta tags, as mentioned in the article you refer to, they are not a universal tonic and are by no means universally supported by search engines. Their presence will not in itself solve the problems caused by frames used on a site.**

If you want to make things better, the only real solution is to strip out the frames in the way advocated in issue 77. For those readers who missed the article, here's a quick recap of what's what.

Many sites are served to the user via 'frame forwarding', where frames may not be used in the site design itself, but are deployed to redirect users from www.whatever.org to the actual location of the site's front page (www.somewhere.org.uk/whatever). This is a common arrangement where domains have been registered cheaply or with companies who do not also provide the hosting for the Web site itself. Although it provides a relatively seamless experience for the site visitor, this frame-based forwarding has numerous pitfalls, especially when it comes to search engines.

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Transfer Domains
Servicezone
Price list
Terms & Conditions
Online-check for free domains:
www.
check
.COM .NET: Redemption Grace Period (Update)
Starting June 1, 2003 the price for this process will be lower from EUR 225.00 to EUR 125.00 due to a price reduction Verisign, which is scheduled for this date.

*Cheap domain name registrars like **www.joker.com** may offer a good deal, but the 'frame forwarding' method will only land you in trouble if you try to build search engine support for your site*

The other major problem that is thrown up by the use of frame forwarding pages is that it splits the apparent popularity of your site in the eyes of search engines. Most engines will register the actual 'home page' of your site as the content's exact URL rather than the more easily remembered domain name (www.whatever.org in this example).

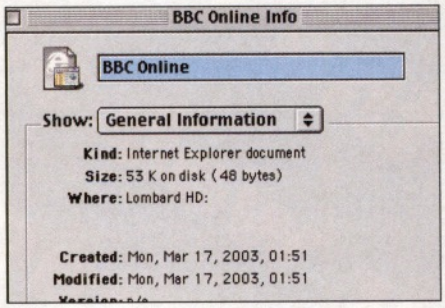
The only solution is to arrange for Web hosting where www.whatever.org points straight to the front page of the site without the use of frame forwarding or any other tricks of the trade. Although it might work out more expensive, it will save a lot of frustration in the long run if search engine success is high on your list of priorities.

Desktop shortcuts

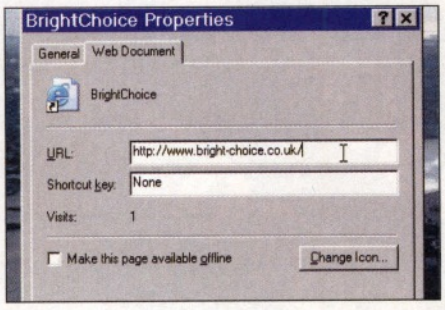
Q I am in the process of building a small site. I would like visitors to be able to put a shortcut/icon on their desktop. Is this possible? If it is, how do I go about it?

Lucy Woolcock

A **Most Web browsers support this alternative method of bookmarking favourite sites, but as with adding conventional bookmarks to a visitor's Web browser, there is no reliably automatic way of making this happen. Although you could allow visitors to download a shortcut file and invite them to save it on to their desktop, these files vary between browsers and Operating Systems, making it nigh-on impossible to cover every possible**


BBC Online Info
BBC Online
Show: General Information
Kind: Internet Explorer document
Size: 53 K on disk (48 bytes)
Where: Lombard HD:
Created: Mon, Mar 17, 2003, 01:51
Modified: Mon, Mar 17, 2003, 01:51

Mac users can create desktop shortcuts to Web pages using most of the popular browsers



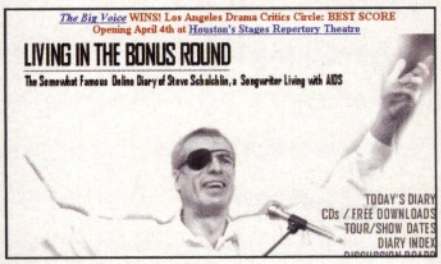
Why bother with browser Favorites when you can put shortcuts to your favourite sites on the desktop?

Readers' sites

Share your site with us – send the URL to **helpdesk@paragon.co.uk**

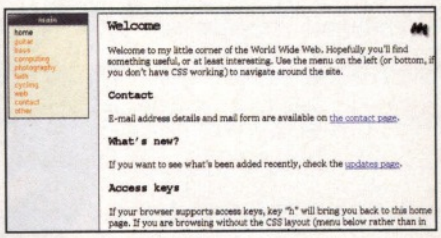
Thought Café

Creator: Jonathan and Wendy Beckett
URL: www.thoughtcafe.co.uk
Effortlessly merging the feel of a Web log and discussion forum, Thought Café is a forum for writers to share and comment on their work in a creative, non-commercial environment. Although the design has a sober feel, the site is well thought out from a usability perspective.


The Big Voice WINS! Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle: BEST SCORE
Opening April 4th at Houston's Stages Repertory Theatre
LIVING IN THE BONUS ROUND
The Somewhat Famous Online Diary of Steve Schalchlin, a Songwriter Living with AIDS
TODAY'S DIARY
CDs / FREE DOWNLOADS
TOUR/SHOW DATES
DIARY INDEX

The Bonus Round

Creator: Steve Schalchlin
URL: www.bonusround.com
An award-winning songwriter maintains this life-affirming Web log. Steve views the current period of his life as 'the bonus round', as he was expected to die from AIDS in 1996. The site contains digital photos and samples of his music.


Welcome
Welcome to my little corner of the World Wide Web. Hopefully you'll find something useful, or at least interesting. Use the menu on the left (or bottom, if you don't have CSS working) to navigate around the site.
Contact
E-mail address details and mail form are available on the contact page.
What's new?
If you want to see what's been added recently, check the updates page.
Access keys

Mark's Web Site

Creator: Mark Tranchant
URL: www.tranchant.freeserve.co.uk
Although not the most visually spectacular page you'll see online, this site is of interest to Web designers as its creator hones his own skills in HTML through trying out new design techniques on his pages. The navigation system makes excellent use of CSS.

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combination and keep up with changes to browser specifications.

You could provide instructions to users, as the method of creating a desktop shortcut manually does not really vary between browsers. The simplest advice to give is that users move their Web browser window into a position where some of their computer's desktop is visible. Then they just need to drag the small icon, which appears to the left of the Web page address bar, on to the desktop. This creates a shortcut like the ones shown on the previous page.

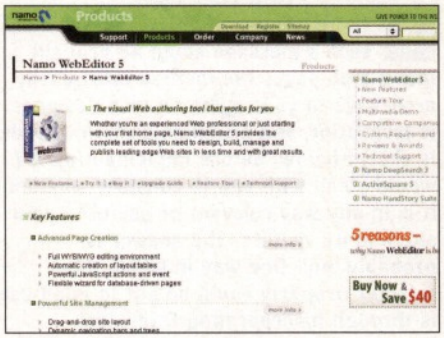
Web design software choice

Q I have recently been evaluating Web Studio 3.01 on a 30-day trial. It seems okay but is there a better program which you would recommend to a non technically-minded Web designer?

Terry Stock

A If you're looking for products in the same budget end of the Web design software market, there are two particular names that I'd recommend considering. The one which is closest to your requirements is probably Namo WebEditor, a very popular and user-friendly package that is better than ever in its latest incarnation; version five. It costs $99 (about £62) to buy – you can pick it up online by heading to **www.namo.com**.

Should you be prepared to get your hands a little dirtier by working more closely with the HTML code that makes up your Web site, without doubt the best package in this market is CoffeeCup's HTML Editor, a bargain at only $49 (about £30) and also available as part of an 'HTML bundle' which includes style sheet creation and FTP packages for $89 (about £55). See **www.coffeecup.com/html-editor** for the full specifications of this great program.



*Download a demonstration version of Namo's flagship Web software at **www.namo.com/products/webeditor***

CoffeeCup has doled out an amazing eight million copies of its HTML Editor over the past few years

Auntie's background magic

Q I've noticed that quite a few BBC Web sites feature photos where text covers part of the image and the background behind the text is lighter, still showing the photo but making it easier to read the text. It looks so seamless that I can only imagine they're using some advanced HTML image manipulation trick that I haven't heard about. Please can you tell me what they've done and how I can use it on my site?

Daniela Watkins

A There are no special tricks used on the BBC site to make images appear as you describe. It just edits the image in whatever package is used for preparing the Web graphics. To get a faded effect, all you need to do is select the area to fade, and then either alter the 'Brightness/Contrast' settings for the selection or fill the area with your Web page background colour at a low opacity, eg 30%.

The BBC site actually slices the faded and non-faded sections of image into two graphics, and relies on the Web browser to sew them back together when displaying the page. The 'faded' part is set as the background of the table cell in which the text appears. Although this ensures that the text is always placed right over the image, it causes problems for visitors who have their browser set up to display fonts larger than normal size, as the image will be split apart to allow sufficient space for the text.

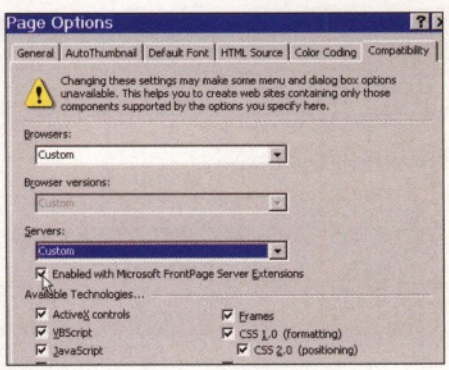
The latest official HTML and style sheet (CSS) specifications include image fading

Forum frustration

Q Thank you for providing an alternative to a chat room for my site at **www.palaceavenue-methodist.org.uk**. I think a discussion forum is just what we want. I have been unable to find the 'Discussion Web Wizard' in FrontPage that you refer to – I just wondered what I might have been doing wrong! I use FrontPage 2000.

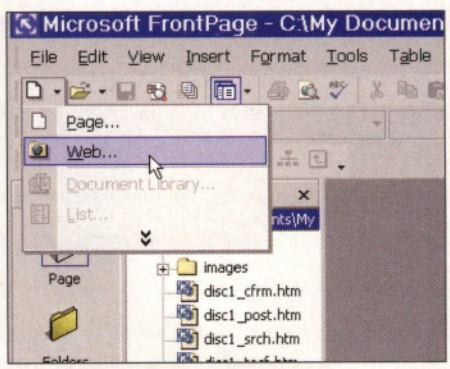
Mike Smith

A There has been a Discussion Web feature since FrontPage 97, so you're definitely not missing out because of an earlier version. You may be hitting problems because of a lack of FrontPage Server Extensions on your Web server – if this is the case, FrontPage will hide certain features. The four steps here show you where to find the Discussion Web creator and also help you check you've not accidentally disabled any FrontPage features.



1 Page Options

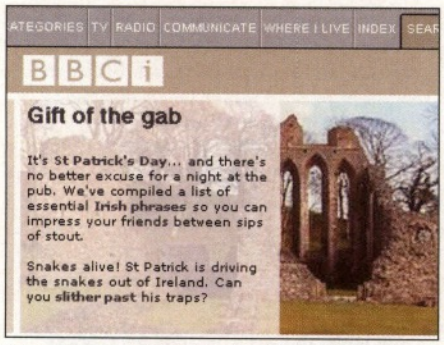
In the 'Tools' menu of FrontPage, you'll find a 'Page Options' item which has a 'Compatibility' tab that allows you to specify what features of FrontPage should be made available for the document you're currently working on.



2 Creating a New Web

To access the Discussion Web Wizard and other wizards and Web templates, click on the triangle to the right of the 'New Page' icon in the button bar. Select 'Web' from the resulting pop-up menu. This produces a dialog box.

techniques, which allow the designer to set an opacity level for an image to alter its appearance without actually editing the image itself. When combined with scripting, these techniques could make images dynamically fade in and out over time. However these opacity properties are not supported by any of the major Web browsers at the time of writing. One half-way house solution which has been mentioned in these columns previously is to create a patterned GIF image which has some pixels coloured the same as the page background and others set as transparent. By positioning this patterned GIF over the image that you want to fade out, a pretty good effect can be achieved. But as even this solution relies on browsers both supporting transparency properly and displaying the images in the correct positions, the technique used by the BBC remains the only sure-fire way of getting the faded image appearance you're after.


ATEGORIES TV RADIO COMMUNICATE WHERE I LIVE INDEX SEAR
BBCi
Gift of the gab
It's St Patrick's Day... and there's no better excuse for a night at the pub. We've compiled a list of essential Irish phrases so you can impress your friends between sips of stout.
Snakes alive! St Patrick is driving the snakes out of Ireland. Can you slither past his traps?

No magic tricks on display here – just a little cunning image editing and slicing

Name dropping

Q I've noticed that some sites include messages referring to the site that linked me to that particular page. Can I integrate this into my home page? Or does it involve technology beyond the reach of the humble Web page designer?

Rupert Moore

A **There are lots of different ways that such a message could be brought into a Web page. The method most easily accessible to your common Web designer is JavaScript, and a sample section of code is shown below. Before implementing it I would plead with you to consider whether it is in any way relevant or useful to your site and its visitors. The answer is probably 'no'. One way in which this referrer property could be put to good use is through incorporating it into the information passed invisibly from a fill-in form. It would be handy in this case for you to know which site linked the user to you. Of course this information is readily accessible if your Web host provides server logs, as these include referrer addresses.**

```
<script language=javascript
type="text/javascript">
<!- -
if (document.referrer != ' ')
document.write('Thanks for visiting from '
+ document.referrer);
//- ->
</script>
```

Design doctor

Celtic Chords Traditional Music Shop

Creator: Pete Murray
URL: www.celtic-chords.co.uk

AS A DOCTOR who's been known to pun shamelessly, any site with 'chord' in the title is an obvious target. But as the design really doesn't strike the right chord, I feel that it's fair game to feature this site here. There are special design guidelines which apply to any site which includes eCommerce aspects, and I've also got some ideas about how the basic design could be easily improved.

Click less, sell more

The shopping section of the site takes far too long to access, both in terms of the number of clicks the user must make in order to reach a product page, and the loading time involved in getting the JavaScript-driven eCommerce system started. The best solution would be to scrap the existing shop system and look at alternatives such as those covered in this magazine's Your Business Online section.

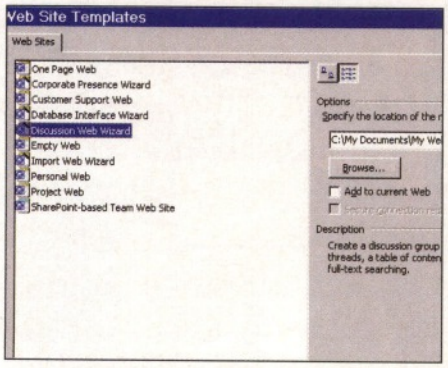
Navigation nasties

It's quite confusing to get around the site, as navigation is split between links at the top of the page and some down the side, which are not always present and can take a while to load as they each are made up from a separate graphic. It would be better to try and integrate everything into one navigation area, avoiding graphics where possible and distinguishing between links within and between pages.

Giant graphics

The small musical instrument graphics featured on the front page take a suspiciously long time to download. This is because the actual graphics are much larger than shown here, and have been squeezed down to a small size by HTML coding. This is bad practice as it slows down page loading. Simply resize the images using a graphics package like Paint Shop Pro. Ideally all the instruments would also be combined into just one image to save even more time.

Forum frustration cont...



3 Making a Discussion Web

In the 'Web Site Templates' dialog, double-click on the template or wizard of your choice to get started on making a new Web. Templates take you straight into creating the Web, whereas wizards guide you through creating the Web.

ublish Destination
nter publish destination:
http://www.practicalinternet.co.uk
Example: http://sample.microsoft.com
If you do not have a Web hosting service, find one that s
FrontPage by using the Web Presence Provider search pa
Click here to learn more.
OK

4 Check the extensions

Select 'Publish Web' from the 'File' menu and then type the Web site address into 'Enter publish destination'. Click 'OK' and follow the other instructions that appear. You'll soon discover whether the Extensions exist on the server.

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Media code: PI0380

In brief:
Task: Play Net music with JetAudio
Software I need: JetAudio
Difficulty: As easy as flying a paper aeroplane
Time I need: Make a night of it

Practical internet IT'S ON THE CD

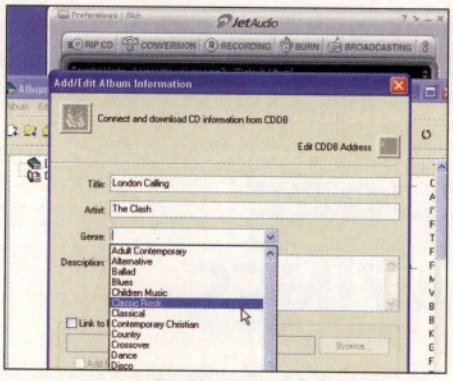
Take music further with JetAudio

TAKE YOUR MUSIC COLLECTION TO NEW HEIGHTS WITH THIS STUNNING FULLY FEATURED AUDIO PLAYER

AS WE EDGE towards a world where CDs are obsolete and everyone carries their tunes about in the form of noughts and ones, there are more and more things we can do with our digital music collections.

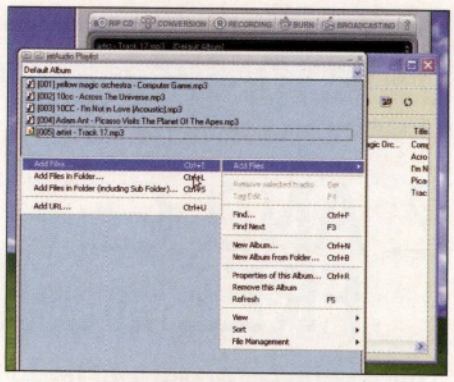
JetAudio is a fascinating piece of multimedia software that lets you do things with your MP3s that you never thought possible. From adding effects such as flange, reverb and crossfading tracks together, to broadcasting your favourite tracks across the planet, the program is great fun to use.

What's more, you can use it to rip CDs, encode them into a different format, then burn to CD. Remember though, that it's illegal to copy and share material which you don't own or you haven't got permission for, so we couldn't possibly condone such behaviour.



1 Manage your music

You can't have a party without music, so after opening the player, click the 'Album' button in the main interface to launch the Album management menu. Here you can create new albums by clicking 'New album' and entering the artist and album title.



2 Creating playlists

Queuing up playlists in JetAudio is as easy as it gets. Click the 'Playlist' button in the main interface to open up your playlist. Now right-click inside the Playlist window and click 'Add track' before selecting a song or songs to add.

3 Tweaking the audio

JetAudio allows you to tweak a multitude of audio settings. You can fiddle with the EQ, using the preset sound modes or by changing the 'User' settings. The settings to the right of this allow you to add extra effects such as reverb and bass boost.

4 Pitch shifting

Clicking the tabs at the bottom and right-hand side of the interface opens more audio controls. The bottom panel lets you change the volume settings. The right-hand panel lets you alter the audio speed and the pitch and apply effects.

Welcome...

SINCE THE ADVENT of reality TV it seems no aspect of our private lives is sacred anymore. As thousands gawp at the every move of hairdressers, nightclub workers, and airport staff, at least Net users can rest easy in the knowledge that no-one can see what they're getting up to online. Or can they?

Every time you surf the Web, tell-tale evidence is left on your machine, allowing anyone to come along and find out what you've been doing. Thankfully, you can put the shutters up by removing any traces of your activity. We show you how it's done, using the excellent Washee utility, on page 84.

After performing this covert cover-up operation you'll probably want to listen to Black Sabbath's 'Paranoid' on MP3, or take in a spy movie. Our tutorials on JetAudio and DivXPlayer will teach you how to get more from your digital music and video.

We've also got workshops on adding functionality to Outlook Express with plug-ins, and sharing files over the Gnutella network using BearShare.

James Thornton, Features Editor

What's inside...

78 **Get to grips with JetAudio**
Master the manifold options present in the amazing JetAudio music player

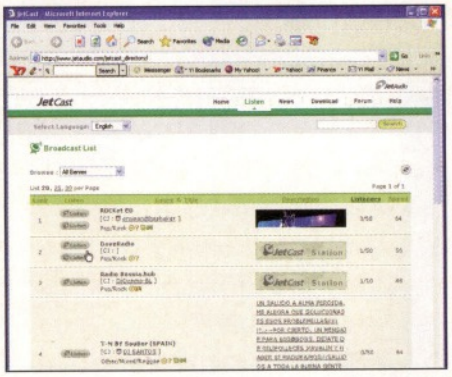
80 **Expand Outlook Express**
Get more from Microsoft's mail client with the help of third party plug-ins

82 **File sharing with Bearshare**
Learn how to pick up files with this, the best of the Gnutella file-sharers

84 **Remove browsing evidence**
Keep your browsing private with the freeware utility that is Washee

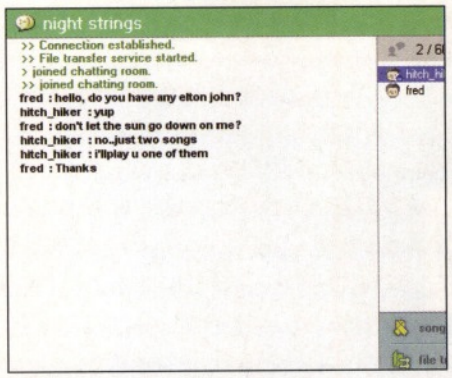
86 **Ditch Windows Media Player**
We've all got the codec, but the DivX player has lots to offer as well

88 **Web browsing Q&A**
Let browsing beefcake Clive Parker assuage your Net and email fears



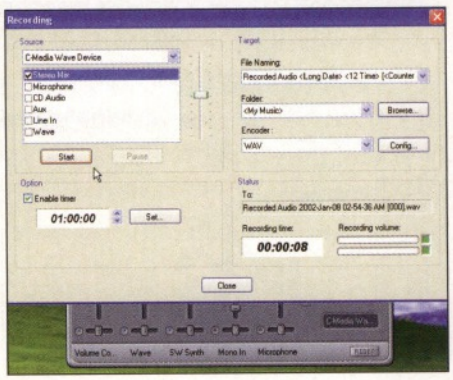
5 Radio what's new?

The player also comes with its own Internet broadcasting support where you can listen to streaming feeds from other JetAudio users. Simply click the 'Broadcasting' button and select the 'Listen' button next to the station of your choice.


night strings
>> Connection established.
>> File transfer service started.
> joined chatting room.
>> joined chatting room.
fred : hello, do you have any elton john?
hitch_hiker : yup
fred : don't let the sun go down on me?
hitch_hiker : no..just two songs
hitch_hiker : i'llplay u one of them
fred : Thanks
fred

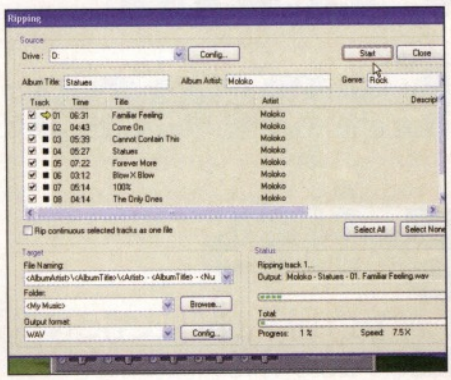
6 Got any Proclaimers?

The great thing about the broadcasts is that you can go interactive by clicking the 'Chat' link next to many of the stations. Here you can chat with the station's host, request tracks, or even exchange MP3s via the 'File transfer' button.



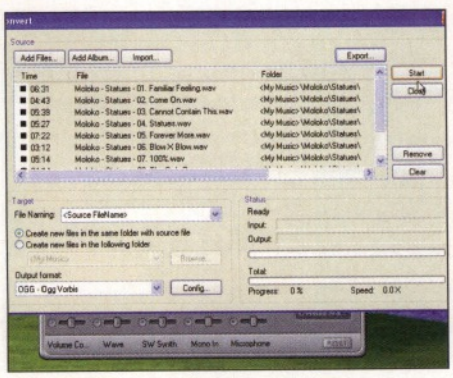
7 Recording streams

If you're enjoying the Net broadcast, keep it forever by clicking the 'Recording' button. Check 'Stereo Mix', select the recording volume then click 'Start'. The target file is shown on the right and you can even enable a timer to set a recording period.



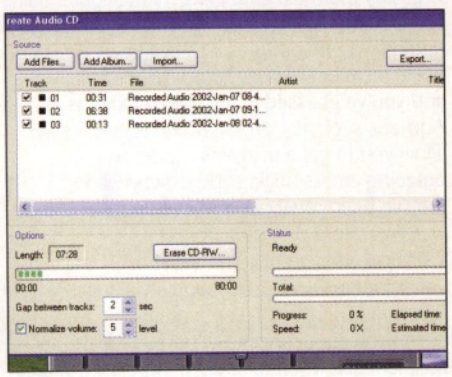
8 Let it rip

Ripping a CD to your hard drive is a cinch and can be done in just a few clicks. Select 'Rip CD' from the main toolbar, insert the disk and select the 'Source' (ie the D: drive). Choose a format to output to, then click 'Start' to let ripping commence.



9 Converting your tunes

After ripping the CD you may wish to convert the audio into a different file format. Click the 'Add Files' button and select the album you've just ripped. Choose a target location and an output format to encode into. Hit 'Start' to convert the files.



10 Burning bridges

JetAudio's 'Burning' option allows you to compile CDs at the drop of a hat. Choose 'Add Files' and select the tracks you wish to burn. The total length is displayed in the 'Options' field. Insert a blank CD-R or CD-RW and click 'Start'.

Jargon buster

Ogg Vorbis

This is an open source audio file format that offers its users enhanced compression when compared with similar formats such as MP3. Because of its open source nature, use of the technology is completely free and unpatented so no royalties need to be paid to anyone.

Streaming

The process of transmitting a media clip over a network so that it starts playing back as quickly as possible, without the need for lengthy download times. If your connection is a bit dodgy, you may find that the stream is less than seamless, but they are generally of good quality.

Power users' tip

LIKE ANY MEDIA player worth its salt, JetAudio comes with a range of visualizations to get your eyes dancing. These colourful animations are among the best we've seen and rival those found in Windows Media Player or iTunes. To access the visualizations, click the 'Visual' button in the main interface and choose 'Start/Stop Visualization' from the drop-down menu to open the animation. The tab underneath the main window lets you select the visualization from the various presets or you can click the 'Shape' radio button to select a certain shape. The 'Controller' panel to the right of the window allows you to tinker with the shape's properties.

In brief:
Task: Power up Outlook Express using plug-ins
Software I need: Outlook Express plus the plug-ins listed below
Difficulty: Intermediate
Time I need: An hour or so

Get more from Outlook Express with plug-ins

POWER UP YOUR MAIL CLIENT WITH THIS COLLECTION OF FANTASTIC OUTLOOK EXPRESS PLUG-INS

THERE CAN BE no doubt that Outlook Express is the most popular POP3 mail client around. That's not to say the Microsoft program is perfect, though, and aside from the fact that it's prone to bugs, it can also become boring to use, as it lacks some of the exciting features served up by programs such as Eudora and Incredimail.

Fear not, as you don't need to settle for a bland, humdrum mail client any longer. You don't even need to ditch Outlook Express. Thanks to the power of plug-ins, you can inject your client with extra functionality. These small programs can be used in conjunction with OE to help you get more from your emailing.

There are literally hundreds of different plug-ins out there that are compatible with Outlook Express and they aren't too hard to find on the Web. We've included a selection of our favourites on this month's cover disc for you to try out, and here we provide an overview of how they can transform the way you send and receive email. If you're anything like us, once you've installed the add-ons you'll be thinking up excuses just to email people so you can test out the wonderful new functions they provide.

The limits of what can be done with the help of plug-ins are virtually endless. They range from addressing common email problems such as junk mail and privacy protection, to allowing you to mess about with groovy new backgrounds and email stationery.

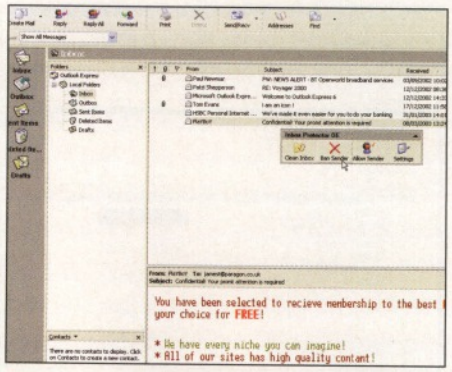
The wonders of plug-ins

Arguably the most infuriating thing about email as a communication medium is that you never find out when your message has been digested by its recipient. Actually, you can find this out and you've guessed it, it involves plug-ins. Add-ons such as Confirmax and ActiveTracker allow you to get a progress report on your outgoing emails, telling you exactly when they've been received, and even how long they were read for.

There are even plug-ins available that allow you to speak out loud to people via email. Programs such as TalkSender let you easily attach voice greetings to your mail which the recipient can listen to straight away from within Outlook Express.

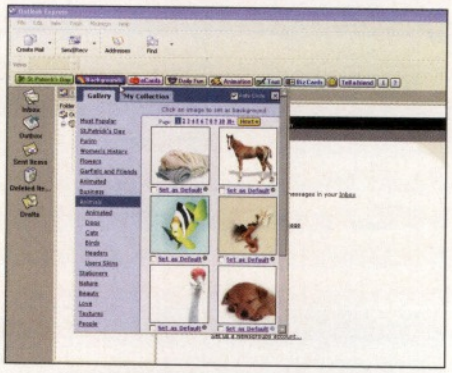
If you've enjoyed using the following plug-ins why not hunt down some more on the Web? If you come across one that transforms your life, email us at **pi@paragon.co.uk** and we'll share your recommendations with one and all.

Practical internet IT'S ON THE CD


You have been selected to recieve membership to the best
your choice for FREE!
* We have every niche you can imagine!
* All of our sites has high quality content!

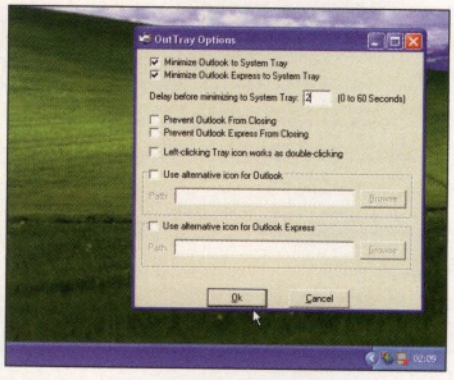
1 Inbox Protector OE

This junk mail filter scans all incoming email, redirecting unwanted junk mail to a separate folder for later inspection. To prevent newsletters and mailing lists being filtered out, you can customise the filter to keep a list of ongoing senders.



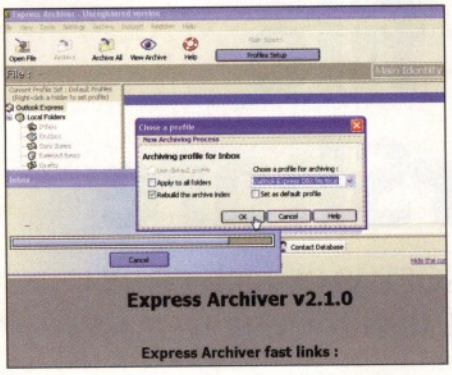
4 Hotbar 4.0

Using Outlook Express can get a little dull rom time to time, so put Hotbar to work and inject some fun into your emailing. You can use the program to apply backgrounds, animations, smileys and preset text to your messages.



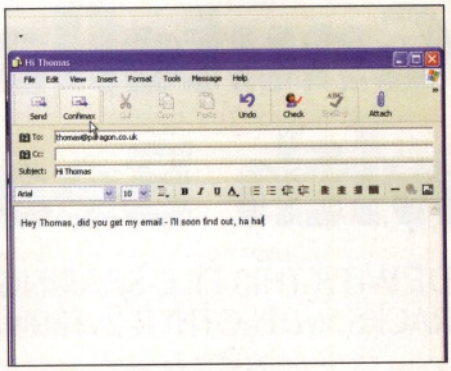
7 OutTray 2.01

OutTray minimises Outlook Express to the System Tray, so you can access its features without having the program fully opened. You can even specify the number of seconds that you wish to wait before moving the program to the tray.



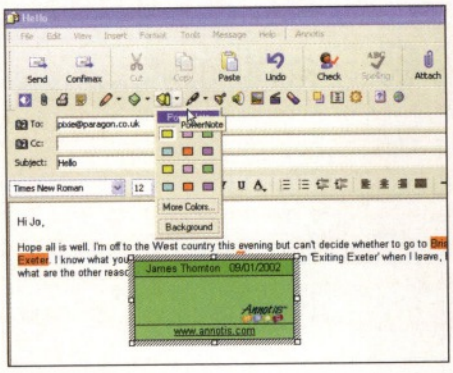
2 Express Archiver 2.1

If you never want to lose your email contacts, it's an idea to install Express Archiver. This plug-in lets you take contact from messages in DBX files on your machine, extract them and back them up, then drag and drop them back into OE.



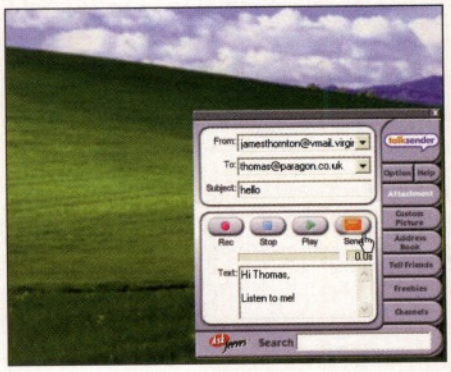
3 Confirmax 5.0

One of the most frustrating things about email is that you never know when your message has been read. Confirmax can help out, by informing you as soon as a message has been read. Just click the 'Confirmax' button instead of 'Send'.


Hi Jo,
Hope all is well. I'm off to the West country this evening but can't decide whether to go to
Exeter. I know what you
what are the other reas
James Thornton 08/01/2002
www.annotis.com

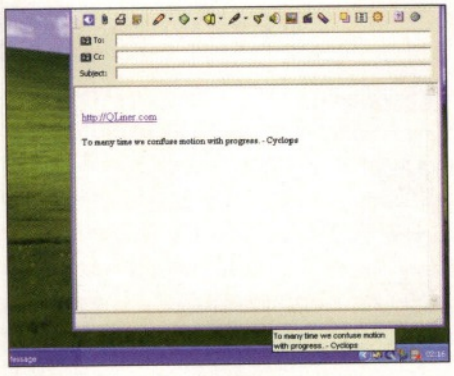
5 Annotis Mail 1.1

Annotis comes with a range of features for putting your point across, such as customisable highlighters, markers, rubber stamps and sticky notes. You can also improve communications by highlighting key points in your messages.



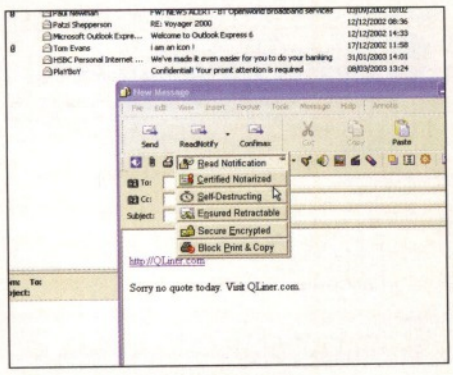
6 TalkSender 2.7

Sometimes it's difficult to get a point across in writing that would take seconds to explain verbally. TalkSender allows you to record a voice message via a microphone then sending it via email through Outlook Express.



8 Quotes 2002

This plug-in gives you complete control over your signature files, allowing you to categorise and use quotations in your email. Simply left-click the System Tray icon and see a random quotation drawn from a text file category.



9 ActiveTracker 2.0

Want to find out what happens to an email once it leaves your outbox? This handy utility adds a new button to your Compose Email screen, giving you instant access to 12 useful new things you can do with sent mail.

Web resources

Download.com

www.download.com

Stacked with a bounty of succulent Outlook Express plug-ins, this site is one of the most heavily-stocked email resources on the Web. To access the cream of the add-ons, click on the 'Email' link in the 'Business' section and choose 'Plug-ins' from the options that appear. Now simply click the 'Download Now' button next to a plug-in that catches your eye.

About.com

email.about.com/cs/oepluginreviews

The people at About.com seem to know everything about anything and this section on Outlook Express add-ons is no different. Providing a comprehensive round-up of the cream of the plug-ins, the site includes plenty of information on each one, along with another section on Outlook plug-ins.

Jargon buster

Plug-in
A piece of software that extends the capabilities of a larger program, adding new functionality to its existing set of features.

DBX
A file format associated with Outlook Express versions 5 and 6, which is used for archiving email.

System Tray
A section of the taskbars in the Windows desktop that is used to display the clock and the icons of certain programs, allowing the user to access them with a single click.

In brief:
Task: Share files using BearShare
Software I need: BearShare 4.2.5
Difficulty: Intermediate
Time I need: Five minutes to five hours depending on connection speed

Practical internet IT'S ON THE CD

Get into Gnutella file sharing with BearShare

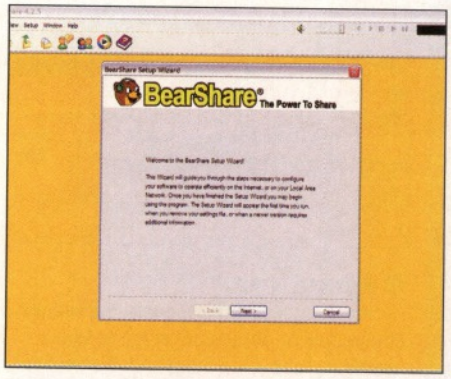
TAKE A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE WITH THIS FILE-SHARING SOFTWARE AND LEARN HOW TO SWAP YOUR MUSIC TRACKS WITH OTHER INTERNET USERS

IF YOU'RE A regular reader, you will no doubt be aware that file sharing has steadily been rising in popularity. You've seen mention of clients such as KaZaA within these pages before, but those of you who are new to the whole file-sharing scene could do a lot worse than try out BearShare.

Where some file-sharing software can be confusing for a novice user, BearShare goes to great lengths to keep everything as simple as possible – and the key to this is its interface.

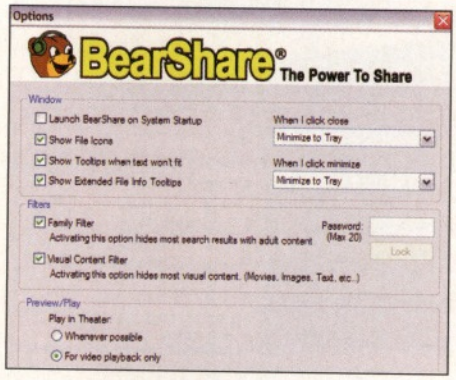
Presented in a similar way to Internet Explorer, new file-sharers will feel instantly at home with BearShare – and by the end of this workshop you'll be happily sharing files with the rest of the world like there's no tomorrow.

We're going to tell you what you need to know to set up BearShare to give you effective connection speeds, as well as sort your searches to find the best possible results to select for downloading.



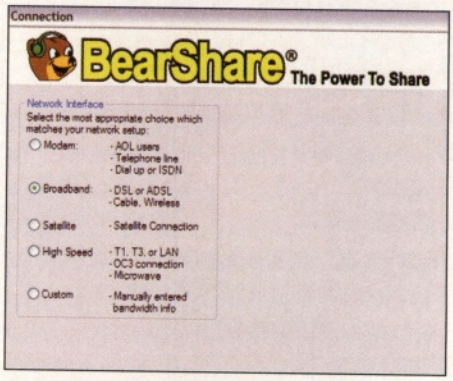
1 Configure the program

After installation, BearShare will ask you to configure the program. The next few screens let you make the most of your connection and determine which of your files you would like made available to others. We are sharing, after all!



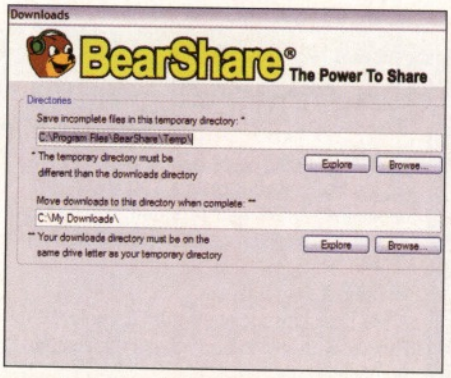
2 Search filters

As file sharing is not without its risks, you may want to activate the Family Filter and Visual Content Filter to keep obscene content out of your search results – especially if children may be using the software. Click 'Next' to continue.


Connection
BearShare
The Power To Share
Network Interface
Select the most appropriate choice which matches your network setup:
Modem: - AOL users - Telephone line - Dial up or ISDN
Broadband: - DSL or ADSL - Cable, Wireless
Satellite - Satellite Connection
High Speed - T1, T3, or LAN - OC3 connection - Microwave
Custom - Manually entered bandwidth info

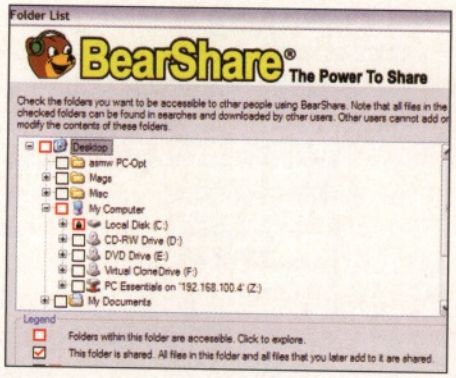
3 Need for speed

On the next screen, you are prompted to select your connection speed. It is essential you select the right one, otherwise BearShare may not take full advantage of your bandwidth and give you slow and frustrating downloads.


Downloads
BearShare
The Power To Share
Directories
Save incomplete files in this temporary directory: *
C:\Program Files\BearShare\Temp\
* The temporary directory must be different than the downloads directory
Explore
Browse...
Move downloads to this directory when complete: **
C:\My Downloads\
** Your downloads directory must be on the same drive letter as your temporary directory
Explore
Browse...

4 Set your directories

You'll now need to tell BearShare where to store your downloaded files. Unless you have somewhere else in mind, BearShare will use the default folders that are created during the installation. This is fine for most users. Click 'Next'.


Folder List
BearShare
The Power To Share
Check the folders you want to be accessible to other people using BearShare. Note that all files in the checked folders can be found in searches and downloaded by other users. Other users cannot add or modify the contents of these folders.
Desktop
asmw PC-Opt
Mags
Misc
My Computer
Local Disk (C:)
CD-RW Drive (D:)
DVD Drive (E:)
Virtual CloneDrive (F:)
PC Essentials on '192.168.100.4' (Z:)
My Documents
Legend
Folders within this folder are accessible. Click to explore.
This folder is shared. All files in this folder and all files that you later add to it are shared.

5 Sharing your files

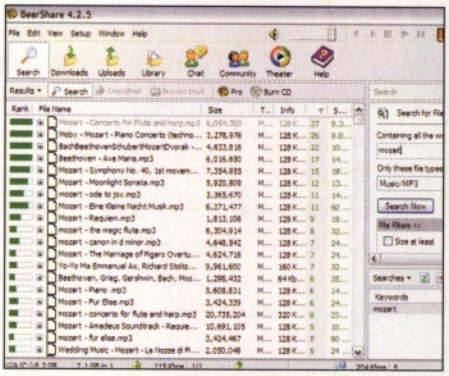
Here you set the folders on your PC for other BearShare users to access while you are online. Obviously only select those folders that you don't mind sharing. If you would prefer others not to access your data, don't select any folders.

6 You're ready

Once configured, you'll be connected to the BearShare server. From here you can search for files to download – so let's get started! Your main search tools are on the right-side panel, along with some advanced filter options.

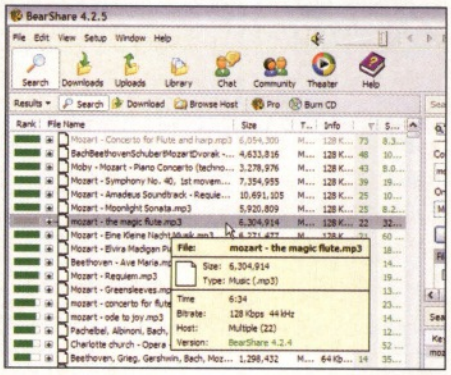
7 Searching for files

Let's look for a Mozart MP3. In the 'Search for files' section, type 'Mozart' and below it set BearShare to search for only music and MP3 file types. Set the 'File Filters' option to a minimum of '1Mb' so we get a high quality recording.



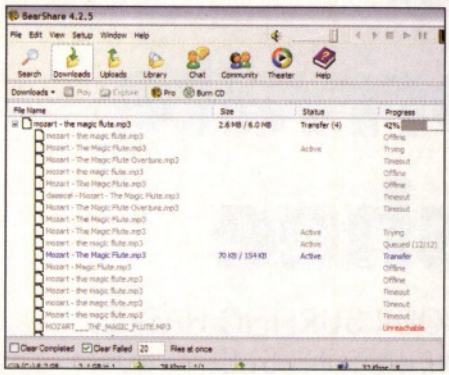
8 Gathering results

Click 'Search Now' and BearShare will start looking for all Mozart music files. The results are automatically ranked with the faster downloads at the top of the list. Depending on your connection speed, searching may take a little while.



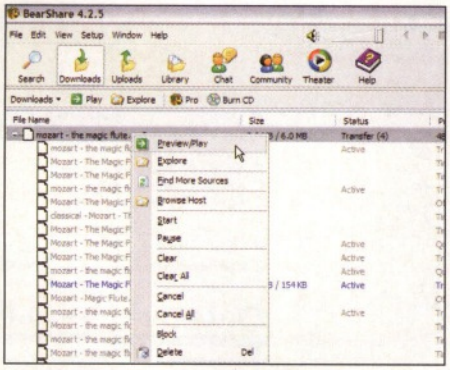
9 Choosing your download

When you spot the file you are after, left-click to select it and see more details. Here you are given the file's recording quality, track length and size. Also of note is the number of places hosting this file – more hosts means faster downloads.



10 Begin transfer

When you are ready to begin downloading the file, simply double-click on it. BearShare will then automatically take you to the download page where your file will be prepared for transfer to your PC.



11 Preview your file

A great feature of BearShare is that you can preview the file while it is still downloading. This is useful if you want to be sure you have found the correct file. To do this, right-click on the download and select 'Preview/Play'.

12 That's it!

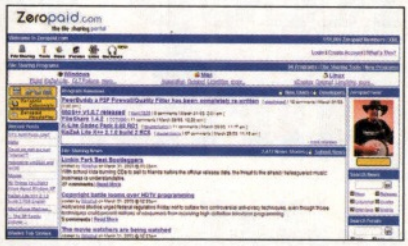
When the file transfer is complete, BearShare will copy the file to the folder you set to store your downloaded data on your hard disk. From here, simply double-click on the MP3 to open your default music player et voila! Enjoy!

Web resources

BearShare Community

www.bearshare.com

If you want to find out more about any aspect of file sharing with BearShare, then you'll find the community Web site a great port of call. Here you can find extensive information on the software as well as hints, tips and tricks to help you get the best out of file sharing.



Zeropaid

www.zeropaid.com

For more in-depth issues regarding file sharing, point your browser at Zeropaid. This Web site offers a wealth of peer-to-peer news and views covering the wide-ranging activities of this online community.

Jargon buster

File sharing

File sharing, or peer-to-peer (P2P) sharing, is a method of transferring files and data between PC users across the Net. It works by each user installing P2P client software – such as BearShare – which lets them specify which files they are willing to allow others to access while online. At the same time, this software allows them to access data on other users' machines.

Content filters

As file sharing is a largely unregulated resource, there is little control over what data a user may wish to share with others. This means that while searching for items to download, some obscene material may turn up in your results. To combat this, BearShare will let you enable content filters which will take out any obscene files from your search list.

In brief:
Task: Surf in complete privacy
Software I need: Washee
Difficulty: Not too tricky
Time I need: Half an hour

Keep your surfing private with Washee

USE WASHEE TO MAKE SURE YOUR SURFING HABITS AREN'T DISPLAYED FOR THE WORLD TO SEE

WHETHER IT'S CCTV on the streets or employers monitoring an office with hidden cameras, it seems you can't go anywhere or do anything without somebody somewhere tracking your moves. So when we are in our own homes, we can be confident of enjoying a certain amount of privacy – that is until it comes to using computers.

When you sit down in front of your computer to surf the Internet, write a letter or play music, a record is kept of it. This could be something completely harmless and even useful, such as saving your position in a game, but in other cases the reasons for tracking your activities aren't always crystal clear. A large majority of Internet sites place cookies on your hard disk, and many others will attempt to add themselves to your Favorites or change your home page.

Foundation level

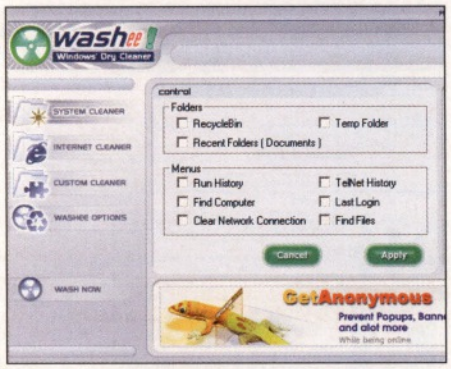
It isn't just Internet sites that are to blame, though, as criticism has been levied against Microsoft for designing Windows to monitor your movements. The auto-save feature in Word will keep a copy of any recovered documents within a folder on your hard disk and your recently accessed files and folders are accessible at the click of a button. The situation doesn't improve when it comes to Web browsing either. As well as cookies, Internet Explorer will store downloaded files, images and Web pages and a full history of the pages you have visited, all of which can be used by spyware and other tracking tools to target you for advertising. This data, although easily accessed through the menu options of various applications, can be eradicated with Washee.

Wash and tidy up

Washee is a simple freeware tool designed to eliminate data from your hard disk that could potentially be used to breach your privacy. You have complete control over what it does by using the tick boxes to select pre-defined areas of Windows to clean. You choose when and what you want deleted and if it doesn't automatically remove something you'd rather not have left on your hard disk, you can take advantage of the Custom Cleaning option to select a folder for removal.

Although it doesn't employ secure wiping – so won't protect you if the CIA decide to drop in and check your hard disk – it has no problem defeating spyware and uninvited browsers.

Practical internet IT'S ON THE CD

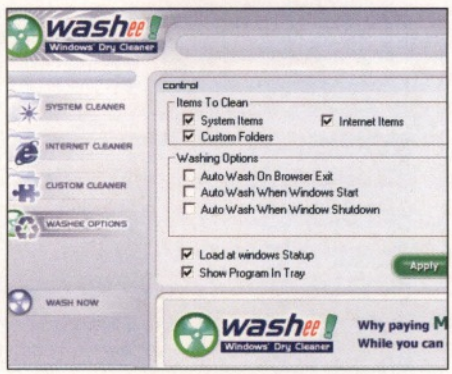


1 Access settings

Washee uses a clean, simple interface with friendly 'XP' colours so beginners will be right at home. Click on each of the four categories to edit various settings and use the 'Wash Now' button to run all the selected cleaning options.

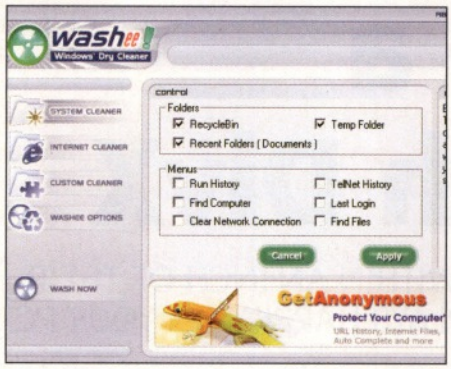
4 Hide your tracks

Click 'Internet Cleaner' to remove evidence of Web sites you've visited or files that have been downloaded. Clearing Favorites will remove all bookmarks, so be careful. The Temp Folder holds complete and partially downloaded files.



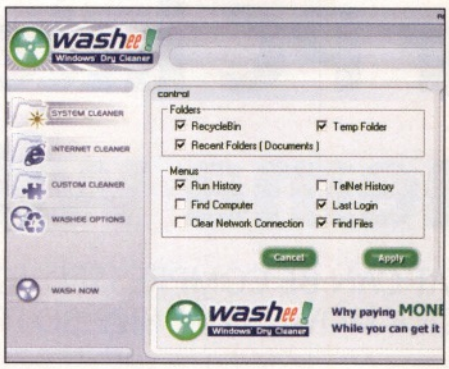
7 Selective cleaning

Click the 'Options' menu to configure what and when Washee will clean. Selecting the items to clean allows you to choose which parts of your system to wipe. You can select to have only Net histories, system files or custom folders or any mix.



2 Delete your history

The System Cleaner will remove some program histories as well as deleting various files. As you are no doubt aware, the Recycle Bin holds deleted files, but the Temp folder can contain downloaded files and other data.

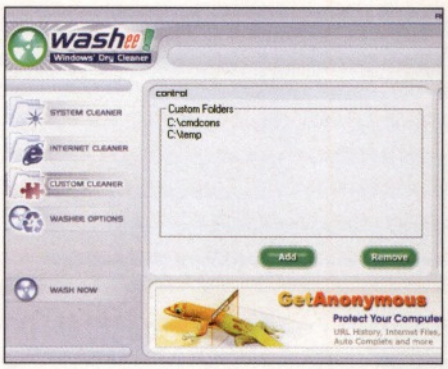


3 Follow commands

Whenever the 'Run' command is used from the Start menu, Windows will keep a copy of the command entered. The same goes for the 'Find Computer' and 'Find Files' option. 'Last Login' holds the username of the last Windows user.

5 Clear your history

The menus of Internet Explorer let you access all previously viewed pages, so use Washee to remove them. Clearing the Password and Form history is also recommended, as it can store login names or email addresses.

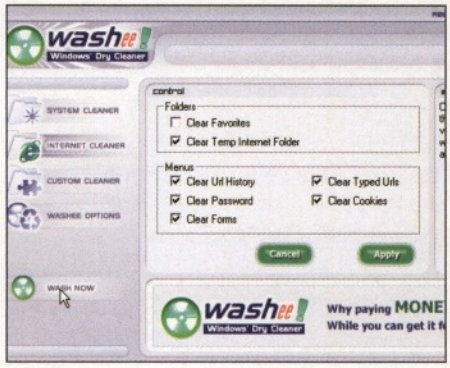


6 Folder spring clean

Washee will also allow you to configure your own folders for cleaning. To add a folder to the list, simply click 'Add' and select it from your hard disk. The 'Remove' option will remove it from the list. Note that this will delete the entire folder.

8 Cleaning Windows

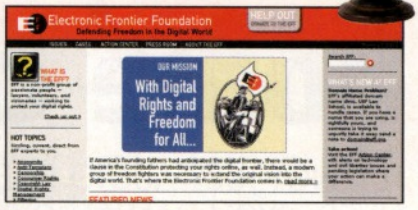
If you're the forgetful type, use the Washing options to set Washee to clean when Windows starts and shuts down. You can also set it to wipe when IE closes. If you have the System Tray icon enabled, you can use a right-click menu to wipe instantly.



9 Clean and serene

Clicking 'Wash Now' will run all the options and clean your system, but you can also wipe individual areas using the 'Apply' button under the Internet and Systems categories. Custom folders must be wiped with the 'Wash Now' button.

Web resources



Electronic Frontier Foundation

www.eff.org

The EFF is dedicated to the fight for online rights and privacy. The site is packed full of info on anonymity, consumer rights, law and plenty of paranoia-inducing documents on government surveillance.

Download.com

download.com

If you are now even more worried about what is happening on your PC and want to protect yourself further, the first place to turn is the ever-dependable Download.com. There are thousands of security applications on here that can do everything from monitoring PC activity to searching for spyware.

Jargon buster

Secure wiping

When a file is deleted it is still present – it's just that the space it occupied is marked as empty and ready for overwriting. Securely wiping a file involves writing over it with junk data until it is unrecoverable. The more times the file is wiped over the less likely it is that an intruder would be able to see the deleted data.

History

Many of the applications you use keep a record of previous activity. This can be useful for quickly accessing documents, but isn't such good news if you don't want other people to see what you've been up to. Many programs have options to clear the history.

In brief:
Task: Play movies with DivX Player
Software I need: DivX Player
Difficulty: Easy
Time I need: Five minutes

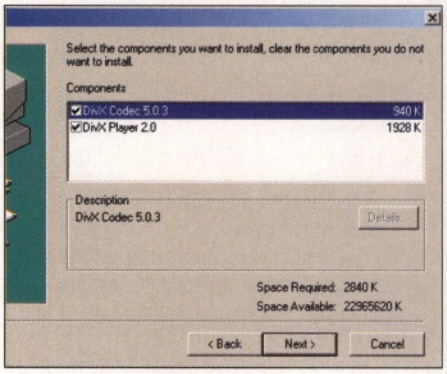
Practical internet IT'S ON THE CD

Turn your PC into a home cinema with DivX

IT'S NOT JUST AUDIO FILES THAT CAN BE COMPRESSED TO WITHIN AN INCH OF THEIR LIVES – YOU CAN ALSO REDUCE A MOVIE'S FILE SIZE SO IT PLAYS HAPPILY ON YOUR PC

WHEN YOU THINK of DivX , it's a fair bet that it conjures up images of geeky hackers in forums swapping grainy movies. That may not have been far from the truth when it appeared in its early form as a modified Microsoft codec, but DivX has now grown to become the most popular choice for encoding and playing high quality movie files on Windows PCs. Often called the 'MP3 of movies', DivX is able to compress a movie file without losing too much of the quality. It won't cost you anything, either. The DivX codec, which is required for playback of DivX encoded movies, can be downloaded for free from the Web site. The codec installs itself from the executable file and allows any compatible movie player on your system to play a DivX file.

One thing that's often overlooked, though, is the DivX player itself. This is installed as standard along with the required codec files and can play AVI, MP4 and DIVX video files. It's this stunning player that we look at here.

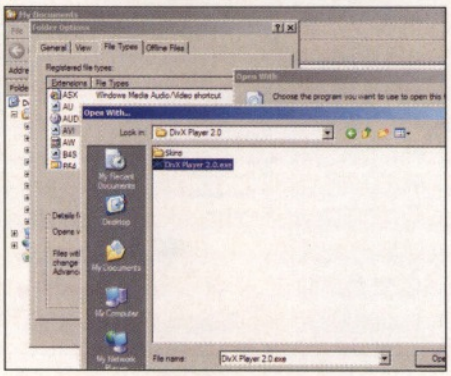

Select the components you want to install, clear the components you do not want to install.
Components
DivX Codec 5.0.3 940 K
DivX Player 2.0 1928 K
Description
DivX Codec 5.0.3
Details...
Space Required: 2840 K
Space Available: 22965620 K
< Back
Next >
Cancel

1 Installation

During installation of the DivX codec you will be asked what components you want to install. Make sure the option for DivX Player is selected. The latest version of the DivX pack can be downloaded for free from **www.divx.com**.

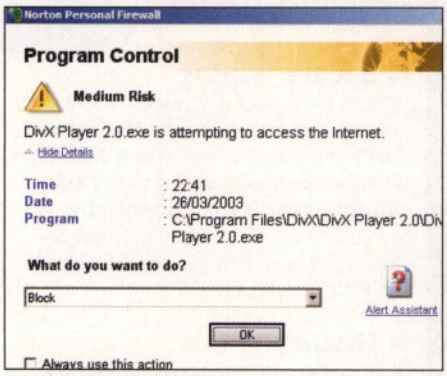
2 Getting started

Once installation is complete, shortcuts will be placed on your desktop and in your Start menu. Open up the DivX player to start a movie. You can associate the player with AVI and MP4 files to have it start automatically when you open such a file.



3 Associations

To associate DivX Player with movies, open any Windows folder. Click the 'Tools' menu and choose 'Folder options', then go to the 'File Types' tab. Find AVI in the list, click 'Change' and then browse to the DivX Player executable file.



4 DivX update checks

If you have a firewall on your system, you will get a warning when the DivX Player starts as it automatically checks for updates on the DivX Web site. If you don't want it to do this, you can safely block the connection.

5 Opening movies

To open a movie file, either right-click anywhere in the program or use the 'Menu' button in the top-left corner. Browse your hard disk to find the movie and click 'Open'. The player will only open AVI, MP4 and .DIVX files.

6 Viewing modes

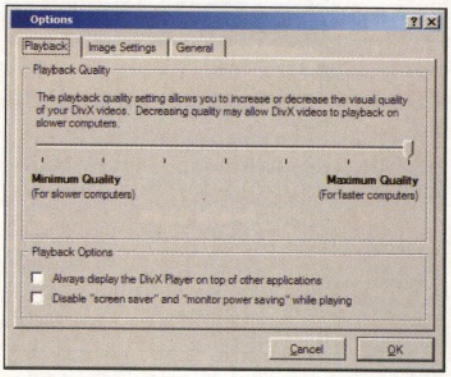
The DivX Player has several different viewing modes – Compact, Normal and Fullscreen. Compact removes all the extra bars and menus leaving just the video window, whereas Fullscreen does the same and also makes the picture larger.

7 Aspect ratio options

One of the best features of the DivX Player is its ability to change the aspect ratio of a video. If you find a movie looks stretched or squashed, use the 'Set Aspect Ratio' option to change it, but in most cases, the Original Aspect setting will fix it.

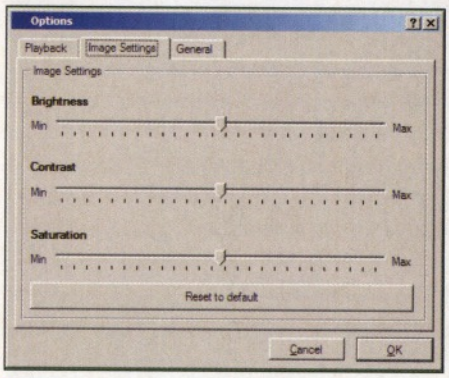
8 Adjust the video size

The player also lets you change the size of the video window using the Video Size menu. Setting the size to Normal gives the best quality but usually at a smaller size, while Double will often make it almost full screen but with a loss of quality.


Options
Playback
Image Settings
General
Playback Quality
The playback quality setting allows you to increase or decrease the visual quality of your DivX videos. Decreasing quality may allow DivX videos to playback on slower computers.
Minimum Quality
(For slower computers)
Maximum Quality
(For faster computers)
Playback Options
Always display the DivX Player on top of other applications
Disable "screen saver" and "monitor power saving" while playing
Cancel
OK

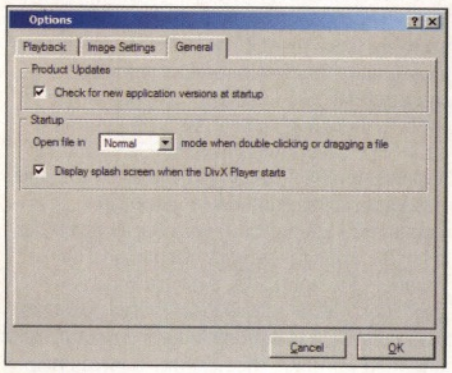
9 Playback quality

The Options menu gives you access to some useful and important settings. The Playback tab will allow you to change the quality of a movie – if you have a powerful computer, it is recommended you set this to maximum.



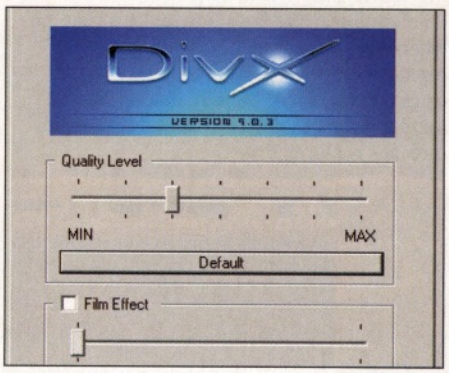
10 Fine-tune the settings

If a film is too dark or too bright, click the 'Image Settings' tab. This lets you make fine adjustments to the contrast, brightness and saturation. Don't be afraid to experiment, as the Default button will undo all changes.



11 General settings

To stop the DivX Player from attempting an Internet connection each time you start it, untick the 'Check for new version' option in the General settings tab. If you want to keep the player on top of other windows, use the option in the Playback tab.



12 Extra options

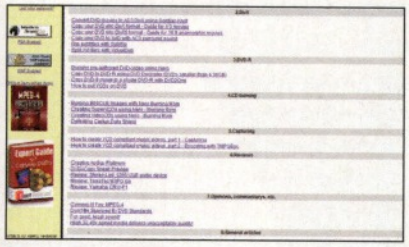
Additional settings for DivX movies can be found by starting the DivX configuration from the Start menu. The quality and aspect ratio options in here will affect playback in all movie players on your system.

Web resources

DivX

www.divx.com

In addition to being the main download site for the DivX codec, this site is also worth a visit to see trailers for new TV shows and films and also to purchase a complete film for download.



Afterdawn

www.afterdawn.com

If you want to convert a movie, burn it to a DVD or make a (legal) backup of your favourite movie, this is the place to go. Despite the questionable legality of some guides, the step-by-step layout makes it very easy to follow.

Jargon buster

Codec

The DivX codec compresses video into AVI or MP4 format and is also used to decompress it for playback. Codecs can also be built into hardware.

AVI

Meaning Audio and Video Interleave, this was developed by Microsoft for the purpose of easily storing video. AVI videos can't go above a resolution of 320 x 240, but they don't need any additional hardware to play, making them perfect for widespread distribution.

MPEG

This means Moving Pictures Expert Group, but is used to refer to the group of standards for audio and video compression. MPEG-1, 2 and 4 are all video formats. MP2 offers the highest quality and is the type used for DVD-ROM.

EMAIL **CLIVE PARKER** AT **HELPDESK@PARAGON.CO.UK** THEN SIT BACK AND RELAX WHILE HE SORTS OUT YOUR LIFE

With a bit of tinkering, you can have Internet Explorer humming like a hot rod

Run DLL

Q I am running Windows 98SE and until a few weeks ago, Internet Explorer 5. I then started to get the following error message when accessing the Internet using dial-up networking: "res://c:\windows\system\shdoclc.dll/dnserror.htm". This does not happen every time but it's getting worse. I uninstalled Internet Explorer 5 and installed Internet Explorer 5.5 but still the problem persisted. I then tried Internet Explorer 6 with little improvement. I have viewed Web sites which indicate that this is quite a common problem. Reasons range from bad coding in the shdoclc.dll file to certain spyware. I would appreciate any help you would be able to provide. Thank you.

Tony Brown

A **From what I've read you need to delete the original shdoclc.dll file on your hard drive and replace it with the latest version. You can download the file from www.dll-files.com. Go to the Web site and type 'shdoclc.dll' into the search box. Follow the instructions and download the ZIP file containing the file to your hard drive. Now delete the original shdoclc.dll. To delete the file, go to the 'Start' menu and use the 'Search' command and type 'shdoclc.dll' into the search box. When Windows finds the file, delete it but make sure you make a note of where the file belongs. Now unzip the replacement version and copy it to the original location of the old shdoclc.dll file. Reboot your PC and all should be well with Internet Explorer 6.**

Follow the instructions and you can get almost any Windows driver file from this all-encompassing Web site

What's free?

Q Can you help me with my problem? Is there such a thing as a free ISP? Because I get only R176 per month as a so-called pension, I have to watch my budget carefully. My present service provider was free but has now elected to charge me for the service as from 1 March. Your advice will be appreciated.

Laurie Jones

A **Hi Laurie. I'm not very familiar with the South African Internet service provider scene but I think I have found a service that may be just what you are looking for. It's called Ananzi and you can find it at www.ananzi.co.za. It provides 10Mb of Web space and POP3 email so you should be able to sort yourself something out. You may still have to pay for your phone calls, unless you get free local calls like they do in the USA.**

If you are looking for a South African Internet service provider then Ananzi should fit the bill – even if it does sound like the title of a stray X-Files *episode*

Road warrior

Q I am based in the UK but I travel privately all over Europe but mainly to France, Germany and Spain, and can't find a suitable Internet service provider. All of the UK service providers appear to depend on proprietary software (such as AOL) or lack 'local to country' dial-up numbers which forces me to use international calls to collect my email or use the Web. Is there such a beast as a UK Internet service provider that allows POP3 via Outlook Express or a PDA running Pocket PC 2002 and has local access numbers in European countries? I am presently with Tiscali which has a huge European footprint but the local dial-in numbers are not readily available and in any case, don't allow access to UK-based accounts. This must be a real problem for a lot of travelers and road warriors – not just me. Can you help at all?

M D Nickerson

A **The only international access service I know of is the Easynet Dial service from Easynet. Easynet is a member of GRIC,**

which provides 12,000 dial-up locations across more than 150 countries. A GRIC subscription costs £25 to set up and then you're charged 25p plus 6p per minute for your connection while abroad. The £25 set up fee includes £15 of connection fees. For more information visit the Easynet Dial Business Traveller page at www.easynetdial.co.uk/integer/businesstraveller.asp or call 0800 053 0551. You can find out more about GRIC at www.gric.com. Another alternative is to use as service provider that

Global roamers should check out Easynet and GRIC

enables you to access your POP3 email account via the Web. I know that BTopenworld does this as do many other service providers. When I'm abroad I generally use the hotel business centre PCs or an Internet café to access my email via the Web. I find this a cheap and cheerful method of keeping in touch while abroad; I've been using Pipex Dial to access my POP3 email through the Web since 1996.

No history

Q I run Windows Me and my service provider is AOL. My question is as follows; when I visit a Web site it is stored in the History section of Internet Explorer so that I may browse it at my leisure later. How do I delete Web sites from this section? I have been unable to find the delete key anywhere on the screen. I don't want unwanted Web sites taking up valuable space on my hard drive. I would be very grateful if you would furnish me with the necessary information. Thank you.

Edward Cursetjee

A **I must admit that I'm a little confused about your question. In AOL's Web browser software, there is no History pane in the same way as there is in Internet Explorer 6, so I'm assuming that you are connecting to the Internet using AOL but browsing the Web using Internet Explorer 6 or an earlier version. Now, I think you need to understand what the History feature in Internet Explorer actually does. It does not store Web pages or sites on your PC so you can look at them later. Instead, it records the address of every Web page you visit and stores a link to it so you can go back to the same site later, even if you have forgotten the Web site address. This storage of Web site links takes up very little space on you hard drive, but you can get rid of it if you really want to. Open Internet Explorer 6 and go to the 'Tools' menu and select the 'Internet Options' command. When the Internet Options control panel opens, you will see a section at the bottom of the General tab labelled 'History'. You can set the number of days links are stored in the History file – I keep mine set to 30 days – or you can click on the 'Clear History' button to delete all records. If you don't want a huge History file, set the number of days to save links to '1'.**

→

Crash and burn

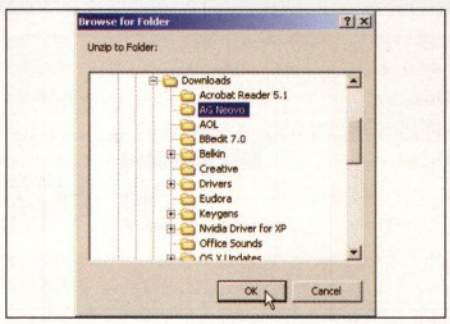
Q I hope you can help me out with my problem. I've recently upgraded to an AG Neovo F-15 flat screen monitor, which seems to work perfectly. It has a good clear image, is much easier on the eye and takes up less space on my desk. But I am having problems with my PC that seem to have started after I installed the monitor. I usually leave my PC running most of the day because I use ADSL and get regular work and personal email. But for some reason, the PC keeps shutting down and rebooting and I can't work out why. It even crashes if no software is running at all except for the Operating System. I'm using Windows XP Professional on a Pentium III with 512Mb of RAM. After a reboot I get the old 'Windows has recovered from a serious error' malarkey but it can't actually work out what the error is, just that there is a problem with 'a driver' but no indication of which one. What do you think the problem is?

Darren Davies

A **I think you are right. I think that it probably is connected with your monitor if that's when you started having problems. I'm guessing that when you plugged the monitor in and booted up it worked fine straight away, so you didn't bother to install the drivers that came with it on a floppy disk. Although in most cases the standard plug and play monitor drivers are perfectly adequate, I've found that when using flat screen TFT monitors it's a good idea to use the correct drivers for the monitor because of bizarre problems such as you have described. If you can't find your original driver disk then you should download the latest drivers from the Web. Follow the steps below...**

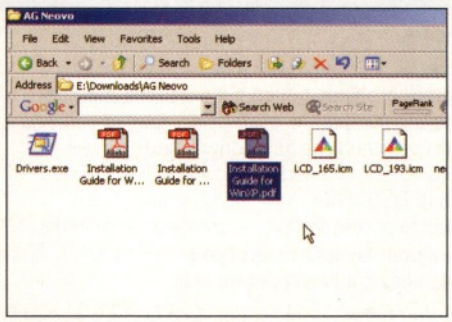
1 Go to the site

You need to go to the AG Neovo Web site at **www.agneovo.com** and click the 'Support' link and then 'Download'. In the download page, right-click the link that says 'F-1'7 in the F-Series line and select 'Save Target As...'.



2 Save to drive

Use the Windows file selector to browse for a destination folder to download the drivers.exe file into. The file is about 1.4Mb in size so it shouldn't take long. After it has downloaded, double-click on the 'drivers.exe' file to run it.



3 Follow the instructions

Click the 'Browse' button in the extractor to select the destination folder for the drivers. Unzip the files and then open the folder where they are stored. Read the installation instructions for Windows XP PDF file and follow the steps therein.

Q&A
Web browsing

Meddlesome mouse

Q I must start by saying that I don't think that this condition has anything to do with the Internet other than it may be a possible virus I have picked up. I have a condition where my cursor decides at random to move across my screen, either left or right, but always horizontally in the line that I last left it. It doesn't happen all the time, but generally when I need to use it to click on a button or drop-down list. Any help will be very much appreciated.

Rick Hanson

A I don't think that you have a problem with a virus. The last time I even heard of a virus that affected a mouse was when I was using my good old Atari ST. There was a range of viruses that affected the mouse for that venerable old computer. Anyway, after searching the Internet for anything that might be relevant I came back to my first thought. It's probably the mouse itself. Take the ball out and give the rollers inside a good clean. If that doesn't help it may be a problem with one of the connectors in the mouse cable. Borrow a mouse and try it on your PC – you'll probably find that it will work perfectly.

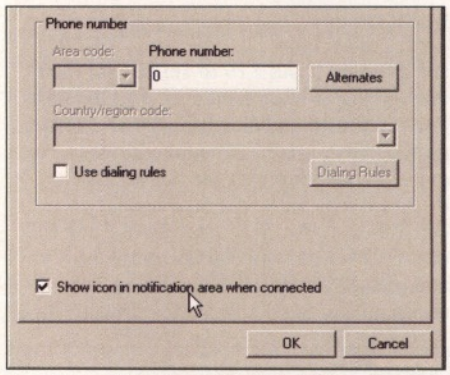
Mice need looking after. I keep mine happy by feeding and watering them regularly and keeping their rollers clean and tidy at all times

What icon?

Q I've been reading advice in several magazines saying you can disconnect from the Internet by right-clicking on the Connection icon in the System Tray and selecting the 'Disconnect' option. Now, at the risk of sounding stupid or like a complete novice, what icon are they talking about? Whenever I connect to the Net using dial-up networking, I have to double-click on the desktop shortcuts and then click on the Disconnect button to end my session. There's no System Tray icon for connection on my PC, so is this a fault with dial-up networking? I'm using Windows XP Home Edition and an ADSL connection.

Jackie Wright

A There's no need to worry, Jackie, it's not a problem with your dial-up networking; it's just a setting that has to be switched on. Go to the 'Start' menu and select 'Settings', 'Network Connections'. When the Network Connections window opens, double-click on the icon for your connection. In the control panel, click on the 'Properties' button. At the bottom of the General page of the Properties panel there is a checkbox labelled 'Show icon in notification area when connected.' Select the checkbox and click on the 'OK' button to exit the Properties panel and then exit the Connection dialog. The next time you connect to the Internet, an icon should appear at the bottom-right of the screen in the 'Notification area', previously known as the System Tray. It's worth noting that there's actually nothing wrong with disconnecting using the method you currently use – one of Windows' quirks is that it often has several means of performing the same function.



Check the box at the bottom of the Connection Properties panel and the Connection icon appears at the bottom of your screen

Bleak Outlook

Q I use Outlook 2002 as my main email client at home and I've noticed a difference in the way it deals with the format of email messages compared to Outlook 2000, which I use at work. I like to use HTML format so I can style the text as I wish. In Outlook 2000 and Outlook 2002, this is fine when creating new messages, and when I reply to any message in Outlook 2000 the reply is also in HTML format no matter what format the original message is in. But in Outlook 2002, if I reply to a message that is in plain text format the reply is also in plain text format no matter what I do to the setting in the Options control panel. Is there any way I can get Outlook 2002 to always reply to message in HTML format?

Andy O'Connell

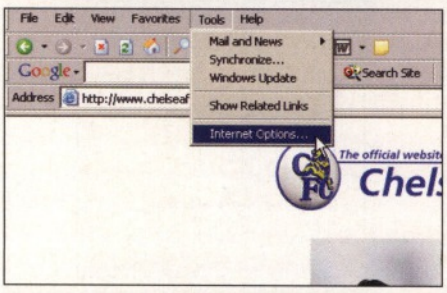
A I've checked through all the settings in Outlook 2002 and I can't see a way to do this. Outlook 2002 always formats replies in the same format as the incoming message and there does not seem to be any

High security

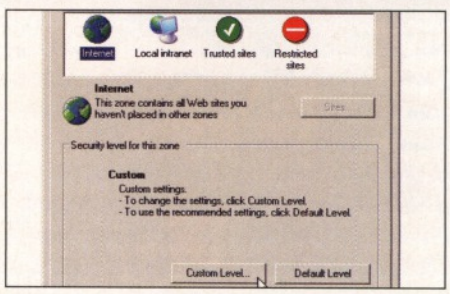
Q I use Internet Explorer 6 to browse the Web and I like it fine except for one small problem. I often get a warning message telling me that the page being opened contains secure and unsecure content and do I want to continue? Of course I do, and I click the 'Yes' button. But how the hell can I turn off this irritating warning? I've gone right through the Internet Options control panel advanced settings but I can't get rid of it.

Lizzy Perkins

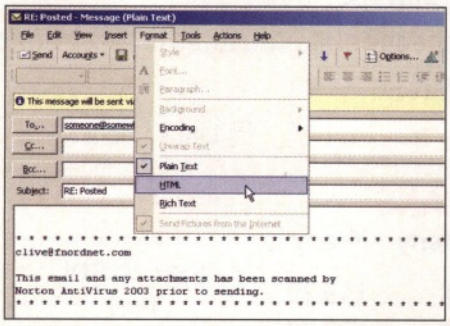
A You are almost in the right area of the Internet Options control panel Lizzie, but you need to click on the 'Security' tab – not the 'Advanced' tab. Follow these steps to disable the mixed content warning.



1 There are always options
Run Internet Explorer 6 as usual and go to the 'Tools' menu and then select the 'Internet Options' command.



2 Run a tab
When the Internet Options control panel opens, click on the 'Security' tab. This tab displays the current security level. Select the Internet globe at the top then click the 'Custom Level' button to make modifications.



In Outlook 2002 you can only style a reply to a plain text message if you change the format to HTML in the Format menu of the reply window. Confused? You will be...

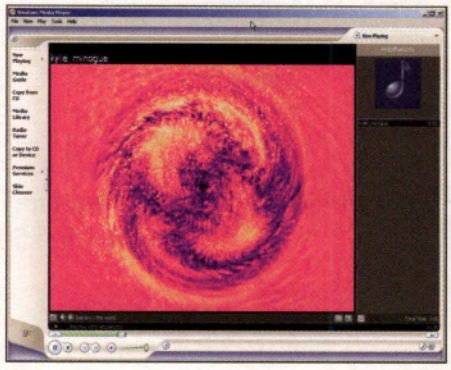
way to override it. The only way around this is to manually change the format of the reply after the message window opens. Click the 'Reply' button in a plain text message. When the reply window opens, go to the 'Format' menu and select the 'HTML' command. Now you can select the content in the body of the message and use the 'Format' toolbar to style the contents in any way you like.

No media

Q I went to the Windows Update Web site yesterday and tried to update to the latest version of the Windows Media Player (mine is version 6.3 I think) but the site told me that all my software was up-to-date. Now I know there have been several new versions of the player and I'm very confused and upset because I would like to use the more advanced capabilities of the newer versions. Any idea what my problem is?

Paul Smith

A **You didn't mention what version of Windows you are using but I strongly suspect that it is Windows NT 4. Because of the inherent limitations of Windows NT 4, you can't use a later version of the Windows Media Player. The only way you will be able to do this is to upgrade your Operating System to a newer version of Windows such as Windows XP Home or Professional Editions. You could try other media players such as the RealOne player (www.real.com) and/or QuickTime 6 (www.quicktime.com).**



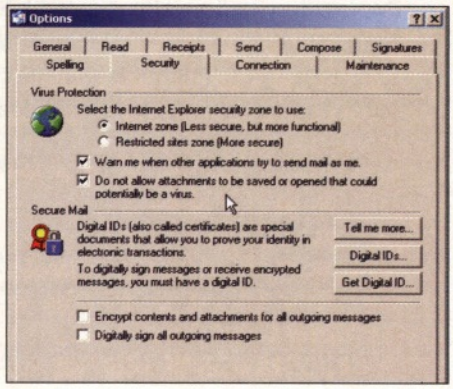
Using Windows Media Player is the only way you'll be able to get Kylie into your home, plus it's a great player

Unattached

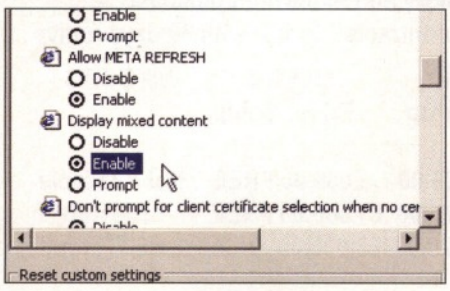
Q Dear Clive, I hope you can help me with a problem I am having with Outlook Express 6. A friend is sending emails to me with files attached but when the email arrives, the attachment has been stripped out by Outlook Express with a message saying that it has removed the 'unsafe attachments' in the email. I'm pretty sure there is an option to turn off this function because I'm sure I've seen similar queries before. I've had a look at the Security page of the Internet Options control panel but nothing stands out.

Leslie Love

A **The option you are looking for isn't in the Security page of the Internet Options control panel; it's in the Security page of the Outlook Express Options control panel. Open Outlook Express 6 and go to the 'Tools' menu and select the 'Options' command. When the Options control panel opens, click on the 'Security' tab. In the Virus Protection section at the top of the panel, uncheck the box labelled 'Do not allow attachments to be saved or opened that could potentially be a virus.' Click on the 'Apply' button and then click 'OK' to save the settings. You should now be able to receive attachments that were previously blocked. Outlook Express 6 has a very heavy-handed approach to possible viruses in attachments; it just blocks the attachments completely. Get yourself some anti-virus software such as Norton AntiVirus 2003, which scans email and attachments as they are downloading and only blocks infected attachments. It also scans emails as you send them out so you don't unwittingly pass on a virus to others.**

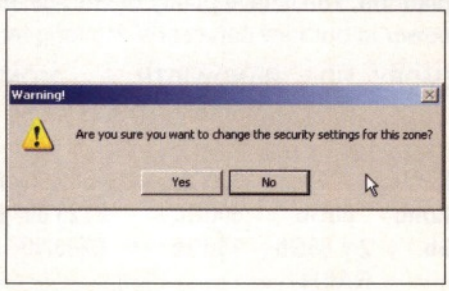

Options
General
Read
Receipts
Send
Compose
Signatures
Spelling
Security
Connection
Maintenance
Virus Protection
Select the Internet Explorer security zone to use:
Internet zone (Less secure, but more functional)
Restricted sites zone (More secure)
Warn me when other applications try to send mail as me.
Do not allow attachments to be saved or opened that could potentially be a virus.
Secure Mail
Digital IDs (also called certificates) are special documents that allow you to prove your identity in electronic transactions.
Tell me more...
Digital IDs...
To digitally sign messages or receive encrypted messages, you must have a digital ID.
Get Digital ID...
Encrypt contents and attachments for all outgoing messages
Digitally sign all outgoing messages

Outlook Express 6 blocks suspect attachments whether they are infected or not. It's best to get dedicated anti-virus protection



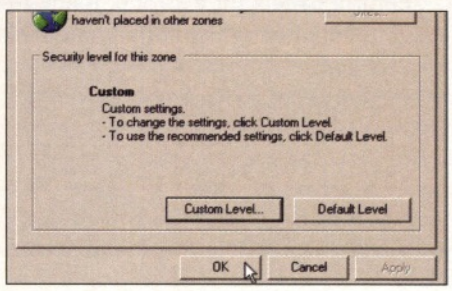
3 Miss E Laneous

In the Security Setting panel, scroll down until you find the 'Miscellaneous' settings, and then scroll down to the 'Display mixed content' entry. To prevent the prompt from appearing again, click on the 'Enable' radio button.



4 Warning!

Click on the 'OK' button in the Security Setting panel to save your choices. An alert box will pop up asking if you want to change the security settings for the Internet zone. Click the 'Yes' button.



5 Save the settings

The Security Setting panel closes and you are returned to the Internet Options control panel. Click 'OK' to close the panel and save the settings. You may have to close Internet Explorer 6 and run it again before the new settings take effect.

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BUSINESS	Intel P4 2.0 Ghz	512mb	60Gb	500Gb	£125.00	£175.00	£1,500.00	FREE	+ £35 mth
ADVANCED	Intel Dual Zeon 2.0 Ghz	1Gb	2 x 80Gb RAID1	750Gb	£250.00	£320.00	£3,000.00	FREE	+ £35 mth
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Your Business Online

EXPERT ADVICE ON CREATING PROFITABLE SMALL BUSINESSES

Welcome...

SINCE EMAIL BECAME the best medium to get hold of people, we've all been bombarded with more and more junk mail from companies keen to see us parting with our cash. From the other side, direct marketing makes a lot of sense – you spend a small amount on getting your name known to thousands, in the hope that just a small percentage will take up your offer. As so many of you have found out, though, it's a difficult path to walk between marketing and sending out junk mail. We set Bruce Townsend of Actinic the task of explaining how you can use direct marketing to its best advantage. Check out his findings on page 98.

Thomas Watson, Editor
thomas@paragon.co.uk

Contents

93 Your Business Online news
New rules that could allow more people to work from home, and alarming news that UK companies aren't prepared for disasters

95 Q&A
Gerard Liston uses his experience and guile to talk you through all manner of business hassles

96 How did they do that?
We drop in on Mapminder to get the lowdown on its technologically innovative new mapping site

98 The rules of direct marketing
Spam is one of the most hated things in the modern world, so we show you how to send out direct marketing emails to your customers without resorting to junk mail

102 eCommerce workshop
Whether you're an old hand at eCommerce or a Net newbie, ShopFactory will enable you to create a fantastic online store. We show you how

106 Web hosting listings
Pick your ideal business home with the help of our comprehensive listings guide

New legislation looks set to open up the world of remote working to more employees than ever before

Remote working set to increase

NEW GOVERNMENT ACT ALLOWS PARENTS TO REQUEST FLEXIBILITY FROM THEIR EMPLOYERS

THE NUMBER OF people in the UK who work from home is set to rocket following the introduction of new Government legislation. Under the Employment Act 2002, a significant proportion of the workforce in this country is now entitled to demand a more flexible working environment.

The Act, which came into effect on 6 April, states that anyone with a child under six, or a disabled child under 18, is entitled to apply for flexible working hours. This flexibility means that a large number of people will now be able to work regularly from home, with other projected plans for term-time working and more shift work for parents.

Employers are required by law to meet with the worker in question regarding their flexible working request within four weeks, then inform them of the decision within a further 14 days. An employer can only refuse the request if there's proof that it would adversely affect the business – according to a number of set Government criteria.

It is predicted that the law will herald a new era of home-working, allowing more and more people to take advantage of the growth in broadband and networking technologies. While eCommerce businesses run from home are unlikely to suffer unduly, the effect of the legislation on the SME sphere could be far more significant.

> **"COMPANIES WILL NEED TO CAREFULLY ASSESS THE NEEDS FOR EACH OF THEIR REMOTE WORKERS" JEFF MEULMAN**

Jeff Meulman, Managing Director of VIA NET.WORKS, maintained that SMEs should be just as capable of coping with flexible working as larger companies. Meulman commented that the biggest problems for SMEs wouldn't stem from not being able to cope, but rather that they could find themselves overwhelmed with the various technological choices presented to them.

"Companies will need to carefully assess the needs for each of their remote workers," he commented. "Businesses confronted by a baffling range of remote working services, both for voice and data communications, need information and guidance to help them make the best choice."

News in brief

→ AT&T conquers Germany

One of the highlights of *Practical Internet's* trip to this year's CeBIT technology fair in Hanover was our visit to AT&T's space-age stand at the event. The company revealed its expansion plans following enhancements to its Global Managed Internet Service. The service, which provides Net connections to support the multi-national sites of the company's corporate customers, has been beefed up to include new high-speed access, a customer-managed router option, usage-based billing and a Web-based reporting facility. Further details are available from **www.att.com/emea.**

→ Look who's talking

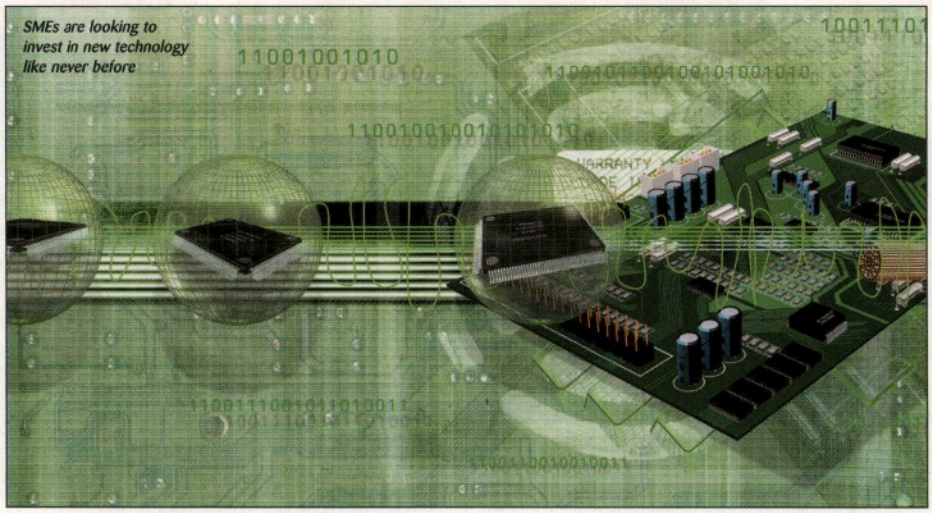
Ex-*Brookside* star, Marcus Hutton, is talking the talk after launching a voice-over service for Web sites. Talking Websites (www.talkingwebsites.co.uk) creates professional voice commentaries for sites in order to improve accessibility and interaction for visitors. Hutton, who played Nathan Cuddington in the scouse soap, said: "Everyone from new Internet users, young children, the illiterate or dyslexic, to experienced surfers bored with looking at one dimensional Web sites, can benefit from online voiceovers."

→ Feeling paranoid?

Workers are coming out in a cold sweat worrying about who's reading their emails. A survey of office workers by Yahoo! Mail showed that half think their colleagues are rifling through their inboxes, while almost a third are concerned about emails with private or embarrassing content falling into the wrong hands. Alick Mighall, Head Producer of Yahoo! Mail said: "Shoulder surfing and email snooping are a part of everyday office life and workers need to adapt in order to survive in this office jungle."

→ Virtual reality

Virtual Internet (www.vi.net) has launched a new range of Linux and Windows servers and support services for eBusinesses and Web developers. At the entry level the new solution promises to serve up all the benefits of dedicated hosting with Virtual Internet for a single monthly cost of £149. The company has also unveiled a range of technical support services.



SMEs are looking to invest in new technology like never before

Small businesses put their trust in technology

SURVEY REVEALS THAT INVESTING IN NEW TECHNOLOGY IS THE TOP PRIORITY FOR THE UK'S SMALL BUSINESSES

SMALL BUSINESSES IN the UK are putting their faith in the Net, and are prepared to splash out on new technology in an effort to improve their operations.

According to a survey conducted by BTopenworld (**www.btopenworld.com**), investment in technology is top of the list of priorities for SMEs in the next financial year. Companies are also keen to cut down on admin costs and improve budgeting and planning, the report says.

Of the 200-plus companies questioned, almost one third of respondents (27 percent) intend to buy the most cutting-edge technology, such as broadband. A similar number of businesses want to cut down on overheads this year, with 26 percent indicating they wish to slash administration costs. A quarter of businesses said they want to turn their attentions to improving their budgeting and planning.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, most firms are reluctant to cut back on their entertainment-based outgoings, with a whopping 96 percent of businesses saying they will not scrimp on company events and corporate days.

Broadband boost

One of the people most likely to benefit from SMEs embracing new technology is Duncan Ingram, Managing Director of BTopenworld.

"Small businesses have recognised the need for cash conservation during these difficult economic times," he said.

"However, they've also latched on to the fact that investment in the latest technology spend can help deliver competitive advantage. Technologies such as broadband, which deliver Internet connectivity at speeds of up to 50 times that of a standard dial-up connection, can deliver an almost instant return on investment."

UK firms not prepared for disaster

WHAT WILL YOU DO WHEN THEY COME FOR YOU?

THOUSANDS OF UK business are ill-prepared for how a disaster such as a terrorist attack could affect their computer systems.

That's the verdict of a survey commissioned by technology services firm, TDM Group, which shows that 360,000 businesses are turning a blind eye when it comes to getting their technology up and running quickly in the event of a disaster.

Since the September the 11th attacks, more companies are taking the issue seriously, and the survey found that 79 percent of firms now have adequate backups in place.

"Not having disaster recovery provisions in place is a bit like driving a car without a seat belt," said Dennis Wijsmuller, Managing Director of TDM Group.

Wijsmuller recommends that companies think about hosting their servers externally and mirroring them. He also says they should back up their data at an external location to prevent the company falling to its knees.

Your Business Online Q&A

EVERY ISSUE, OUR RESIDENT EXPERT, **GERARD LISTON** FROM SMALLBIZ UK, ANSWERS YOUR QUESTIONS. CONTACT GERARD BY EMAILING **PI@PARAGON.CO.UK** OR VISITING THE YOUR BUSINESS ONLINE WEB SITE AT **WWW.YBOANSWERS.CO.UK**

Q I want to set out the terms and conditions of service for my care agency, which needs to meet the Care Standards Regulations. Is there a standard format for this?

Pearl Williams

A **A quick search on Google reveals that the Care Standards Regulations is a 72-page document from the Department of Health, which spells out the minimum standards required of any agency providing domiciliary care (www.doh.gov.uk/domiciliarycare). My guess is that a business such as yours needs to show compliance with regulations, rather than create its own terms and conditions for providing service.**

In any tightly regulated market, it is essential to get the paperwork right, however frustrating and time-consuming 'red tape' might be. The sanctions of the regulatory body could severely restrict your business and even close it down, so you will need to seek its advice. You may find that much of the necessary information is available online. Alongside this, I would suggest talking with others who are already involved with a similar business. They are likely to have tips that could save you time, effort and money.

Q Do you have any advice on methods of credit card payment online? I know of Worldpay, but is there a cheaper alternative?

Neil Penry

A **The right solution for your business will depend on a variety of factors, such as the value of the goods involved, the proportion of your sales that come from the Web and the anticipated turnover. Take a look at some of the advice documents provided by UK Online for Business (available under 'Digital Business' in the 'IT and Internet' channel on www.yboanswers.co.uk). They suggest talking with your ISP.**

If your business is a start-up, it is reasonable to assume that you have very little trading record (making it near impossible to set up your own merchant account) and you have limited funds (making high setup fees unattractive). It might be worth looking at solutions such as Paysystems.com, which offsets low setup fees against higher commission rates. It may also be worth looking at other ways of taking payments online that do not require credit cards. Both paypal.com and nochex.com enable you to receive cash from anyone with an email address.

Q I need some detailed information on how to get business in South East Asia.

Nadia Kausur

A **This is the wrong place to try and provide detailed information, but you're certainly right to do your research before embarking on this course of action. The costs and time required to start trading overseas are significant for any organisation and the task could consume all the resources of a small firm.**

A good place to start is the Government's own Web service – Trade Partners UK. The site (www.tradepartners.gov.uk) enables you to search for background information about different countries and markets. Among other services, it even provides a mechanism to match UK suppliers to potential overseas customers. You might also want to take a look at www.lexicoexporter.co.uk.

While it may be costly to start trading abroad, bear in mind that grants and soft loans are available – particularly if your business is located in a government-supported area of the country. Your local Business Link should know about this, although it might be quicker to take a look at the www.j4b.co.uk Web site.

Gerard's sites

A SMATTERING OF WEB RESOURCES TO ENSURE THAT YOUR BUSINESS GETS OFF TO THE PERFECT START

PaySystems
Welcome to PaySystems
Payment processing has never been easier, safer and more affordable.
ONE STOP SHOP
FOR ALL YOUR PAYMENT PROCESSING NEEDS!
INTERNATIONAL BUSINESSES WELCOME!

PaySystems

www.paysystems.com

Start-up businesses who are having problems finding an affordable way of offering online payment facilities should give PaySystems a look. The company has low setup fees because it charges higher commission rates.

PayPal

www.paypal.co.uk

If sorting out a secure online payment system is starting to be a real headache, you could give up the ghost and plump for PayPal. Although payments are still secure, you don't have to handle any credit cards.

Trade Partners UK

www.tradepartners.gov.uk

Any online business that is thinking about giving a global spin on its products should give the Government's Trade Partners site a go. There's plenty of information about entering markets in different countries.

How we built Mapminder

TELLING PEOPLE WHERE TO GO ISN'T NECESSARILY AN INSULT – ESPECIALLY IN THE ONLINE MAPPING WORLD. **CINDY DUFFIELD** DISCOVERS HOW MAPMINDER HAS TAKEN MAPS TO A NEW LEVEL

Maps are big business. You only have to look at the increasing adoption of Autoroute and the success of Multimap.com and Streetmap.co.uk to recognise that there is a clear market to provide consumers with directions, maps and associated local information of interest. Online map sites provide us with the ability to access details on locations at any time, dispensing with the need to be organised whether we are attending a business meeting or arranging a social extravaganza.

So do we need another one? The answer according to Emma Hardcastle, Managing Director for new launch, Mapbyte Limited, is a resolute 'yes'. Launched in February 2003, its consumer product – mapminder.co.uk – has been a long time coming, taking two and a half years from concept to market. Why? Because the founders wanted to launch the best product technology could offer. Hardcastle explains: "Existing players utilise traditional raster images to download maps, requiring between 25 and 40Kb a go. We, however, send map co-ordinates (vectors) which are around only 1Kb of data." To the uninitiated, what this means is that downloading a map is extremely fast.

Emma Hardcastle is convinced Mapminder has what it takes

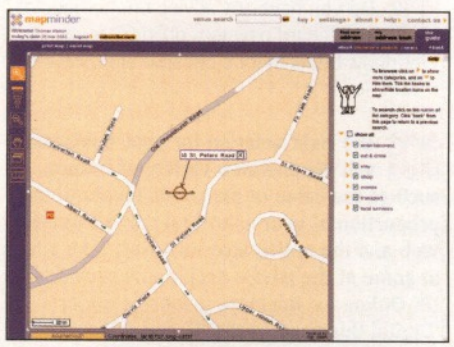
Mapbyte has also taken the exhaustive approach of integrating Ordinance Survey data with residential and business address data. The combination of the two has been provided using one of only two satellite navigation technologies available in the world. It took a year to complete, but Hardcastle outlines the resultant significance: "The combined technologies allow our subscribers to do turn-by-turn routing, taking them to a street number, if they wish, something that we believe is very important to the consumer and a facility unique to Mapminder." The use of a Java client adds gloss to the download speed and compound data, producing a detailed map that is also graphically intense and colourful.

In the beginning

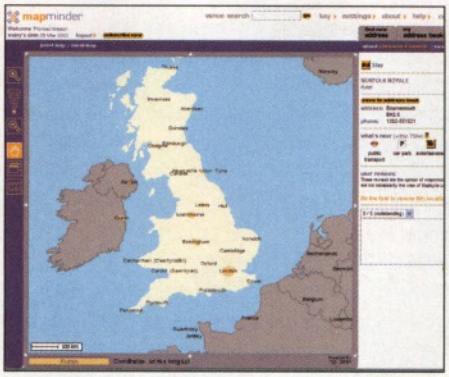
Two genius whiz kid mathematicians developed the original technology in Israel. Their potential was optimised by entrepreneur Vitek Tracz, who established Telmap in 2000 to capitalise on its 'superior mapping capabilities' to develop a consumer product. Telmap is responsible for developing fast, highly graphic maps. Mapbyte was simultaneously established to 'create all the interactive stuff' that transposes a good idea into a commercially viable business.

Some might argue that the speed and graphics and even the detailed routing are 'nice to haves' but insufficient to excite consumers' interest and lure them away from established competitors. In response, Mapbyte has used its development time to stuff mapminder.co.uk with additional features, which allows it to sell itself as a social club that you want to be a member of.

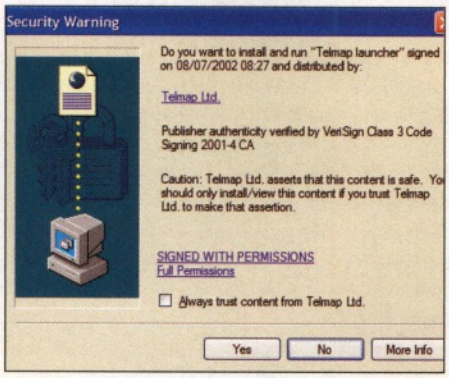
The fundamentals are that Mapminder allows its users to search and map to 26 million UK destinations by address, postcode, crossroad



The interactive maps offered by the service will make sure you don't end up going round in circles



It's not just maps – Mapminder can also point you in the right direction of places to stay and things to do


Security Warning
Do you want to install and run "Telmap launcher" signed on 08/07/2002 08:27 and distributed by:
Telmap Ltd.
Publisher authenticity verified by VeriSign Class 3 Code Signing 2001-4 CA
Caution: Telmap Ltd. asserts that this content is safe. Yo should only install/view this content if you trust Telmap Ltd. to make that assertion.
SIGNED WITH PERMISSIONS
Full Permissions
Always trust content from Telmap Ltd.
Yes
No
More Info

The technology used in the site does require you to install a Java applet, courtesy of Telmap, but it's all pretty painless

and map co-ordinates – fast. So, having plugged in your home, you can find out the quickest, shortest and walking routes for any specified journey. All well and good, but then add in The Guide: a UK-wide 'what's on' offering ratings and reviews for close to 3,000 restaurants and 10,000 listings from the press association of cinemas, theatre, music and tourist attractions, and you can see why it's a club worth joining.

Personal touch

The clever bit is perhaps the ability to personalise your map, storing personal and business contacts, and to conduct easy mapping and routing between contacts, adding individual information to it, such as favourite restaurants, and then sharing it all with your mates, colleagues or business associates.

> **"WE AIM TO OFFER THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE ONLINE NAVIGATION TOOL"** EMMA HARDCASTLE

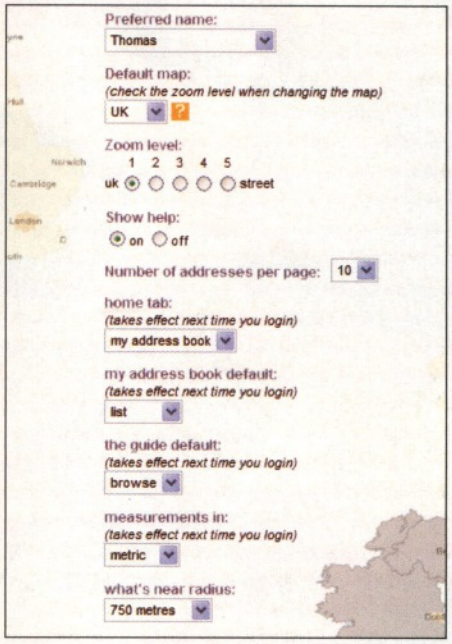
Anyone who may be concerned about the viability of the Mapbyte venture and its ability to sustain financial viability while building the number of subscribers can rest easy. Hardcastle explains: "Mapbyte is part of the Current Science Group (CSG) – a private company with no investors to placate. We're in this for the long haul. It has taken over two years to reach launch stage, bringing to market the best data and interaction tools. It may take another two years to develop the brand – we are prepared for that."

Working out of Cleveland Street in London, Hardcastle has a total team of seven, who are responsible for customer interaction and technology tweaking. But she also has the back up of CSG, a group comprising more than 300 people, and shares its accounting, personnel and administrative resources.

In the first two weeks of its launch, Mapbyte attracted 500 registered users, many of whom have revisited following their initial foray. But right now, free registration is being offered for 30 days. Subsequently, subscribers will have to pay for the service: £2.95 per month, £7.95 per quarter or £24.95 annually. Hardcastle is confident of its success, saying: "We aim to offer the most comprehensive and highly personalised online navigation tool, that also enables consumers to build up a tailored portfolio of information about local interests and provides a one-stop-shop for general route finding, reviews and listings information."

For such a young company, one doesn't expect much clarity when posing the question, 'where from here?' but Hardcastle is succinct in her plans that Mapbyte will not be a one hit wonder. "All of our solutions will be Web-based, but we are taking the technology and developing solutions for different markets." Tracking technology, be it for consumers to locate mobile phone users and for fleet management applications, will be launched this summer. Location-based services, eg 'I'm in Essex Street, where can I eat near here and what is the associated telephone number?' are also just around the corner. No vapourware here – Mapbyte has been trialling the new services for a year and has already established the required business partnerships to support them.

As for Mapminder, the route for success has been firmly planned. Now it's just a case of building awareness for the brand, the benefits of the underlying technology and exciting consumers to rely on it as a resource for organising their work and social lives. ■



Once signed up with the service, you are free to personalise your preferences, storing contacts and relevant Guide information

Site stats

MAPMINDER
www.mapminder.com

- **Who designed it?**
  In-house, with sister company Telmap developing the sophisticated mapping technology, based on its specialisation in real-time mobile mapping for off-board navigation, location management and telematics.
- **Number of registered users?**
  Five hundred signed up for a 30-day free trial within two weeks of UK launch.
- **Technology differentiators?**
  Vector map co-ordinates for speed and an integrated database of ordinance survey and business/residential data, rounded off with sat nav technology for turn-by-turn routing.
- **Infrastructure?**
  Java client/server relationship, utilising vector rather than raster technology for lower data transfer and fast map downloads. Oracle database and JavaScript API. PC, laptop and PDA-compatible (Apple Mac coming soon). Hosted by Globix.

TIME SCALE

- **Aug 1999** – Formation of Telmap and Mapbyte
- **Jan 2001** – Year-long integration of Ordinance Survey and residential/business data begins – a Mapminder USP
- **May 2002** – Beta-testing of mapminder.co.uk with 200 customers
- **Sept 2002** – Deals agreed with the Press Association for the what's on listings and Harden's for the restaurant guide as the foundation for The Guide
- **Feb 2003** – Official UK launch

Get more from email marketing

BRUCE TOWNSEND OF ACTINIC EXPLAINS HOW TO PREVENT YOUR EMAIL MARKETING CAMPAIGN TURNING INTO A SPAM FEST

The use of email for marketing is highly controversial. To some it's the domain of sharks and porn brokers whose mission in life is to irritate as many people as possible. To others it's the Holy Grail of marketing. It's the means of delivering your message to thousands of people at minimum cost, and gaining an instant trackable response. So which statement is correct? Is there a way for businesses to utilise the medium of email? And where are the boundaries of what's acceptable or offensive – not to mention legal?

Don't spam so close to me

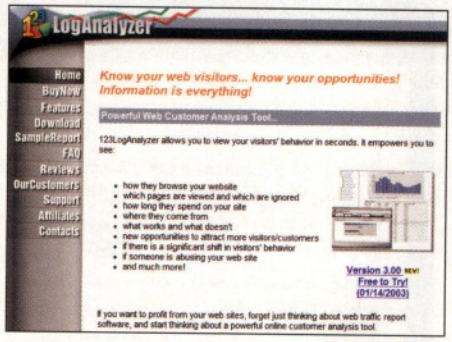
Marketing emails obey the Third Law of Thermodynamics – which basically means they will keep going to the wrong people, unless you work hard at getting them to the right ones. So plan not to spam – go out of your way to observe data protection laws and follow good practice.

Under the latest Advertising Standards Authority code, you must obtain explicit permission before sending email to anyone for marketing purposes. It's no longer enough just to allow them to opt out. On 31 October 2003, the EU Privacy and Communications Directive will make this the law anyway – so you may as well start complying now.

When you email, tell the recipients how they got on your list, and have a clear privacy policy on your Web site, with a link to it in each email. Provide an easy way to unsubscribe from your list. Make sure it works, and explain how to use

DM NEWS
The Online Newspaper of Record for Direct Marketers
April 6, 2003
SEARCH NEWS
search
Panelists Address Economy, Challenges at Direct Media Co-Op
WHITE PLAINS, NY -- Direct marketers sounded off about how they're coping with the economic challenges of the past few years in a morning panel at yesterday's 29th annual Direct Media Mailer Conference and Co-Op here.
More...
Senate Passes USPS Bill; House OK Up Next
The Senate passed a bill this week allowing the U.S. Postal Service to scale back some of its pension payments, a move that could keep rates steady until fiscal 2006.
More...
FedEx, UPS Claim DHL Deal Violates Federal Law
FedEx and United Parcel Service have
Seeking to attract U.S. families, Cayman Brac will take its first shot at direct mail to position itself as a nature destination.
More...
Legal/Privacy
Bill Seeks Permanent Ban on Internet Access Taxes
List News
Craig T. Smith Appointed Chairman of Experian Worldwide
Postal News
President's Postal Commission Meets Today

*The DM News Web site (**www.dmnews.com**) contains a wealth of information on direct marketing, including an online newsletter*


LogAnalyzer
Home
BuyNow
Features
Download
SampleReport
FAQ
Reviews
OurCustomers
Support
Affiliates
Contacts
Know your web visitors... know your opportunities!
Information is everything!
Powerful Web Customer Analysis Tool...
123LogAnalyzer allows you to view your visitors' behavior in seconds. It empowers you to see:
how they browse your website
which pages are viewed and which are ignored
how long they spend on your site
where they come from
what works and what doesn't
new opportunities to attract more visitors/customers
if there is a significant shift in visitors' behavior
if someone is abusing your web site
and much more!
Version 3.00
Free to Try!
(01/14/2003)
If you want to profit from your web sites, forget just thinking about web traffic report software, and start thinking about a powerful online customer analysis tool.

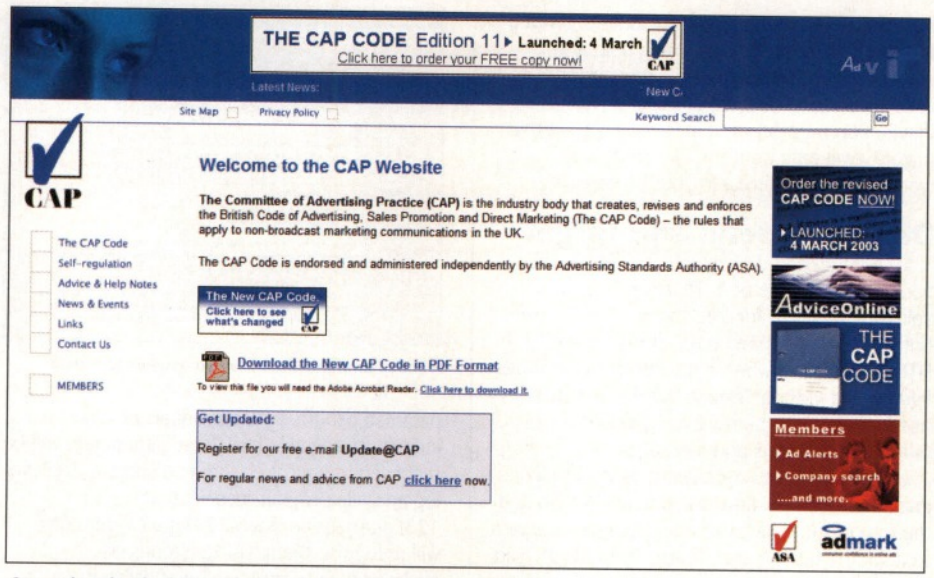
Keep an eye on your Web visitors using a log analysis program such as 123LogAnalyzer

it. Also, provide your full contact details on your Web site, so that people can contact you by other means if they want to.

You've been flamed

Dedicated mailing software such as Groupmail (**www.infacta.com**) will enable you to manage your mailing properly, and help with things like deleting addresses that bounce (the email equivalent of a 'no longer at this address'). If you only have an email client like Outlook Express, use the built-in mailing list feature, or at least put the list of recipients in the Bcc: field. If you just paste the address list into the To: or Cc: fields, you will reveal all the addresses to everyone on the list. This is objectionable, illegal, and will clutter up the communication. It's such a common error that you will probably be forgiven. But you will get 'flamed' and be forced to apologise – and you may lose some customers.

Your emails will be welcomed and read if they create a positive sense of community and


THE CAP CODE Edition 11 ▸ Launched: 4 March
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Site Map
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Keyword Search
Go
CAP
Welcome to the CAP Website
The Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP) is the industry body that creates, revises and enforces the British Code of Advertising, Sales Promotion and Direct Marketing (The CAP Code) – the rules that apply to non-broadcast marketing communications in the UK.
The CAP Code is endorsed and administered independently by the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA).
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Self-regulation
Advice & Help Notes
News & Events
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association. Find an empty niche and colonise it, make yourself an expert, advertise your existence, and provide a relevant service. That may sound hard, but if you have a successful business then you've probably done it already. You just have to get the point across in your email. Be clear what you're offering – whether it's the cheapest widgets on the Web, or the best customer service in Yorkshire. Don't make a sales pitch – offer helpful buying advice and information. Provide up-to-date news: don't email so frequently that people get fed up – or so infrequently that you're out of date. Email when you've got something useful to say. Don't write loads either – provide links to interactive Web pages.

"YOUR EMAILS WILL BE WELCOMED AND READ IF THEY CREATE A POSITIVE SENSE OF COMMUNITY"

Most people like to be offered something for nothing, provided it's relevant to them. Offer something unique that's relevant to your

Case study – E Botham & Sons

Name: Mike Jarman
Company: E Botham & Sons
URL: www.botham.co.uk

Mike Jarman is an Internet veteran, having put his Yorkshire bakery business online in 1995. He now sells 150-200 items online and on average, gets 200 orders per month. The catalogue is a carefully-targeted collection of items such as celebration cakes, biscuits, preserves, teas and coffees, along with a range of hampers containing selections of these goods.

Over the years he has found that his style of email marketing has a success rate of around 3%, which can sometimes rise to 5% or 10%. He currently mails 2,000 existing customers four times a year for Mother's Day, Easter and Christmas (an early alert about placing overseas orders and then a reminder). But he warns: "Don't overdo it or customers will start to ask to come off your mailing list in their droves."

Some tips from Mike:

1. Never buy in lists. Only mail to existing customers and make sure you ask permission.
2. Restrict mailings to three or four times a year and ensure you aren't just giving a hard sell. Include some useful or interesting information. Mike, for instance, tells people about the family tradition of egg rolling in his Easter newsletter.
3. When collecting email addresses, categorise them into groups that will make your mailings more relevant and flexible. For example, Mike wishes he'd originally grouped emails geographically, as countries often have different dates for some events such as Mothering Sunday and unique celebrations like Thanksgiving.
4. Personalise the outgoing email if possible and also your response – don't just rely on auto-reply. The personal touch has been key to Bothams' success in eCommerce – his customers return time and again.

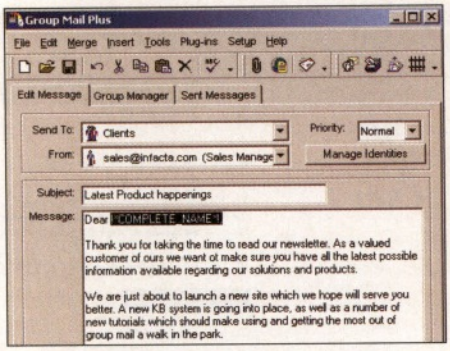
business and useful to your customers. If not a free product sample, try offering help and advice articles, or comparative reviews of related products. A prize draw for a free PlayStation may deliver a lot of 'leads'; but the majority will only want the PlayStation, and won't have any interest in your products.

Don't just send and forget

Track what generates real interest – that way you can offer more of it. There are expensive solutions available for tracking email responses, but you can take some basic steps just using HTML email. You won't get completely accurate figures, but you don't need them – you just need to measure the relative effectiveness of different campaigns and messages.

Upload a unique 1x1 pixel transparent GIF image for each posting, and create a link to it at the foot of the email. Use a log analysis program to track the hits on each image. This will give an idea of how many copies of each email were opened, or at least previewed.

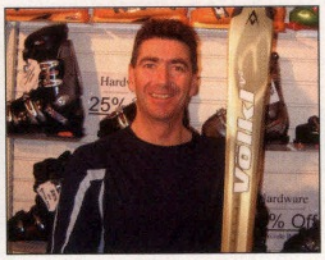
Create a specific landing page on your Web site for each story, with links in the email. Then track the visitors to these pages using your site log. Add an order form on pages with specific offers, and track the resulting purchases. When linking to a generic Web page, add a unique parameter to the link, eg widgets.co.uk/index.htm?specialoffer. These parameters will be recorded in your Web log, and some entry-level log analysis programmes such as 123LogAnalyzer (**www.123loganalyzer.com**) will recognise them. Using Groupmail mailmerge, you can even personalise the parameters to track who has clicked through to which page.


Group Mail Plus
File Edit Merge Insert Tools Plug-ins Setup Help
Edit Message
Group Manager
Sent Messages
Send To:
Clients
Priority:
Normal
From:
sales@infacta.com (Sales Manage
Manage Identities
Subject:
Latest Product happenings
Message:
Dear [COMPLETE NAME],
Thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter. As a valued customer of ours we want of make sure you have all the latest possible information available regarding our solutions and products.
We are just about to launch a new site which we hope will serve you better. A new KB system is going into place, as well as a number of new tutorials which should make using and getting the most out of group mail a walk in the park.

Dedicated email software will help you organise your email marketing campaign no end

Sadly, following this advice won't stop you being a victim of spam – but it will at least stop you being a culprit. And it might stop you from irritating the potential customer who could give you your biggest ever sale. ■

Case study – Snowlines



Name: Colin McPhail
Company: Snowlines
URL: www.snowlines.co.uk

Colin McPhail sells winter sports kit and fishing tackle via a high street shop and the Web. Recently he has used a mix of in-house lists, a specialist Internet marketing agency and postal direct mail.

Snowlines has a database of 6,000 existing customers, and mailings regularly achieve a 20% success rate. He finds the best combination is a mailshot via Royal Mail followed up by emails. The latest campaign promoted the summer collections plus a massive sale of skiing and snowboarding equipment, and gave recipients 24 hours to buy online before the sale started in the shop. By the first lunchtime, £3,000 worth of orders had been placed, building to £30,000 within three days. This was an excellent return on the £3,000 investment – 99% of which was the printing and postage costs.

Colin also paid a few hundred pounds to a Net marketing specialist for a trial email broadcast to 35,000 addresses, but can't attribute any of the extra orders online or over the counter to this.

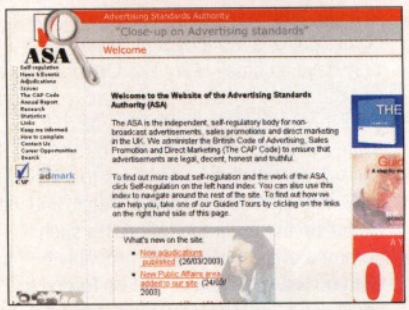
Some tips from Colin:

1. Target your existing customers and never share your list with another company.
2. Avoid using ANY graphics – even if they're small – in the email as they can easily jam up older PCs that are accessing the Net via slow connections.
3. Lead the promotion with a very attractive offer that will appeal to a wide range of people among your target audience, eg. offering fishermen an expensive rod (specially bought in bulk for this offer) at 75% off list price.

Web resources

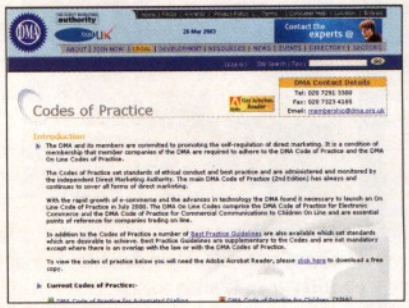
Actinic
www.actinic.co.uk

Anyone with even the slightest interest in setting up an eCommerce site should visit Actinic for a vast range of software solutions and advice. Register for a 30-day trial of its site-building software.



Advertising Standards Authority
www.asa.org.uk

When you're thinking about an advertising campaign for your online business, pay a visit to the Advertising Standards Authority site for those all-important guidelines.



DMA
www.dma.org.uk

Keep on the right side of the direct marketing law by placing yourself in the hands of the Direct Marketing Authority. All the information you need is here.

the devil is in the details...

SalesOutlook CRM

Expand Microsoft Outlook and Exchange into a powerful, flexible, and customisable Customer Relationship Management (CRM) Workflow solution.

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All trademarks and registered trademarks acknowledged.

In brief:
Task: Get yourself an eCommerce site
Software I need: ShopFactory 5.2
Difficulty: Intermediate
Time I need: Less than an hour, of course

Practical internet IT'S ON THE CD

Create a business site in less than an hour

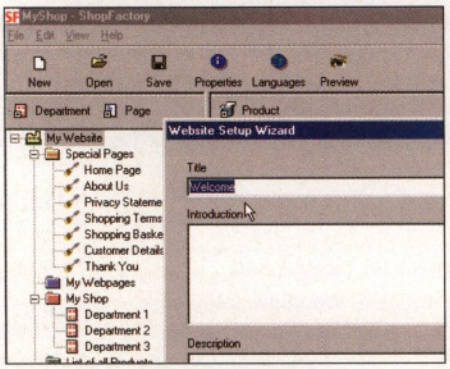
THANKS TO THE POWER OF SHOPFACTORY 5.2, YOU CAN HAVE YOUR ONLINE BUSINESS SUITED AND BOOTED IN NO TIME AT ALL

IF YOU'VE EVER dreamt of creating your own online store, there are plenty of software options available that will help you out. The only downside is that if you've never had much to do with creating Web sites, many of them might seem too difficult. There is salvation, however, in the form of ShopFactory. This fully-featured program contains a whole raft of functions, many of them surprisingly advanced, which allow you to create an exciting ebusiness but without the need for any real technical knowledge. This is thanks to its template-driven structure and step-by-step construction process. In fact, all you really need to get started is the initial idea, some suitable content in the shape of text and graphics, and you're all set.

ShopFactory has been around in various guises since 1995, although the latest incarnation is streets ahead of its predecessors. What's more, later versions also support all manner of online payment systems, including traditional credit cards along with PayPal, giving your customers an easier and more convenient way of shopping than ever before.

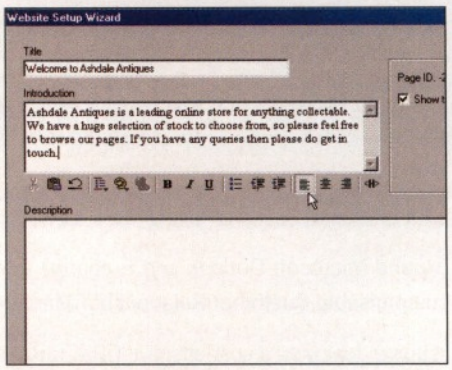
1 Getting underway

The creation process couldn't be simpler. After installing the program, launch it and you'll be greeted by the following screen. All you have to do is select the option you require – in our case we've selected the 'Create a new Web site or shop' option.



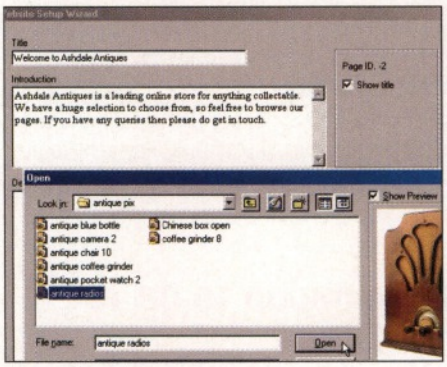
2 The home page

The creation process is remarkably speedy thanks to the 'Web Site Setup Wizard'. This takes you through the creation of your pages using a simple window where you insert text and graphics. Your first page will be the home or 'index' page.


Website Setup Wizard
Title
Welcome to Ashdale Antiques
Introduction
Ashdale Antiques is a leading online store for anything collectable. We have a huge selection of stock to choose from, so please feel free to browse our pages. If you have any queries then please do get in touch.
Description

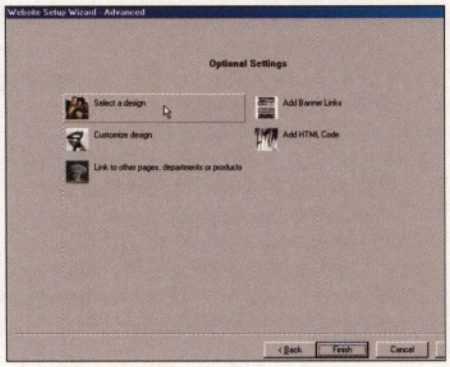
3 Type it in

Each area that needs text on your page can be edited. Place your cursor in the 'Introduction' area and start typing. You'll see a row of font formatting tools appear, which let you specify size, colour and alignment, among other options.


Website Setup Wizard
Title
Welcome to Ashdale Antiques
Introduction
Ashdale Antiques is a leading online store for anything collectable. We have a huge selection of stock to choose from, so please feel free to browse our pages. If you have any queries then please do get in touch.
Page ID: 2
Show title
Open
Look in: antique pix
Show Preview
antique blue bottle
antique camera 2
antique chair 10
antique coffee grinder
antique pocket watch 2
antique radios
Chinese box open
coffee grinder 8
File name: antique radios
Open

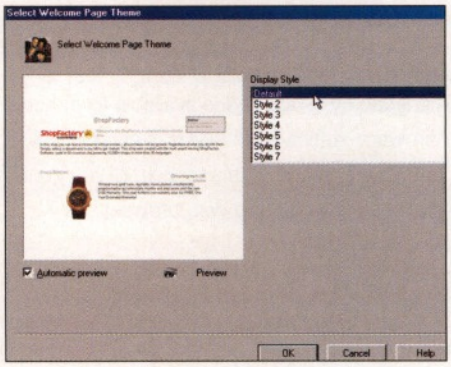
4 Pick an image

On the right-hand side of the same formatting window is an image selection box. Click the small file icon to navigate to an images folder – ensure your files are suitably compressed and saved as JPEGs or GIFs ready for the Web.



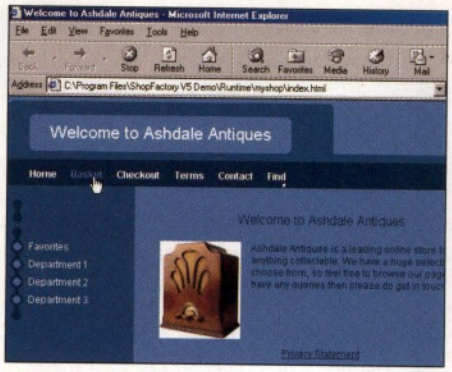
5 Choose a template

Once you're happy with the text and image selection, click 'Next'. You are now taken to a template area, which allows you to specify the whole structure of your finished site. Click 'Select a design' to get this process underway.



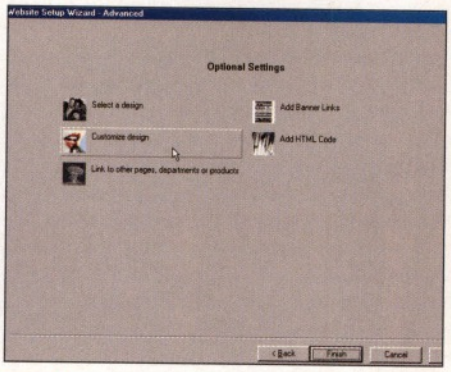
6 The perfect page

There are many styles to choose from. Scroll through to preview the one that best suits you. Or, if you prefer to keep it simple, select the 'Default' option at the top of the list. You can always go back and tweak settings later on if need be.



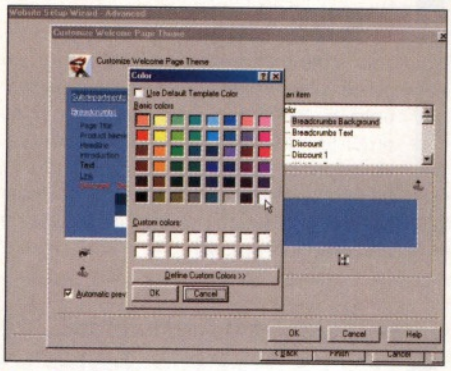
7 Take a peek

The 'Preview' feature is invaluable for checking that everything is going to plan. Here we are taking a look at the basic design of our page – the colour scheme is a little too modern, so we'll go back and select something more fitting.



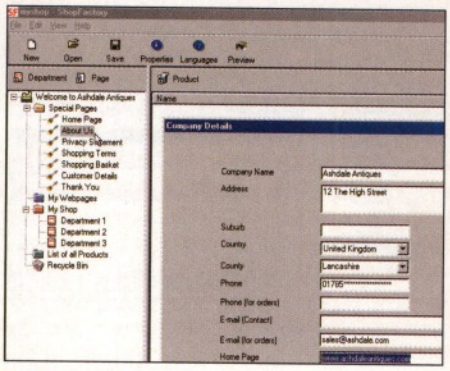
8 Work back through

In order to tweak your site design, double-click on the page in question. It will then reopen the windows you used previously. Click the 'Next' button until you come to the final site options and then select the 'Customize Design' button.



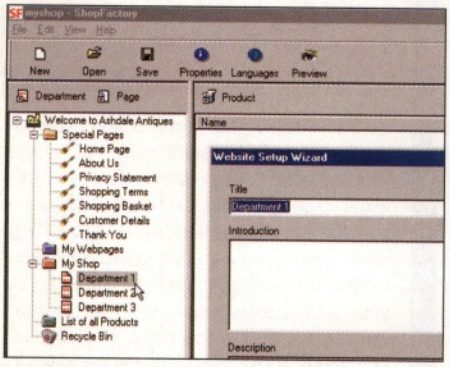
9 Pick a colour

The whole look and feel of your pages can now be changed to suit your needs, including all of the component parts. Click on the area you wish to change and then select a colour option from the pop-up box that subsequently appears.



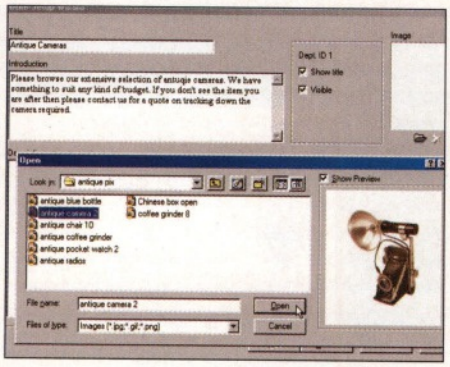
10 Build it up

Use the window on the left-hand side to work through the basic page structure and use the dialog windows to add vital information. For example, here we are adding address and contact details. It's very simple to configure your pages in this way.



11 Create a department

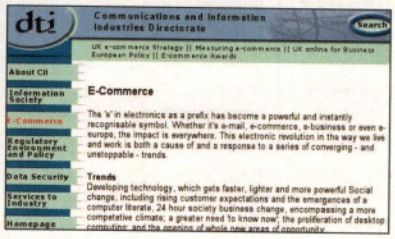
Once you've completed the basic pages, click on the 'Department' options to start creating the various departments where you will sell your products. This is the same as a traditional shop, with different departments suited to differing items.



12 Departmental decisions

Use the Wizard as before, but be sure to name the departments correctly – this is where some forward planning can help. Follow the plan you drew up before starting in order to organise your departments into appropriate categories.

Web resources



DTI

www.dti.gov.uk

This Government site is a good place to start in order to learn more about the subject of eCommerce. Lots of facts and figures plus guidelines on where to go next. Useful for finding out about latest developments in the world of online business, too.

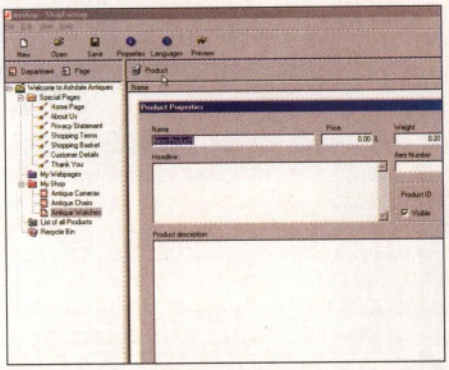
ShopFactory

www.shopfactory.com

This is the home of the ShopFactory program and therefore a very worthy place to visit. You'll find the latest news about the product and advice on how to get the best from the program. You'll also be able to know when the company releases a newer version of the product with even more advanced features.

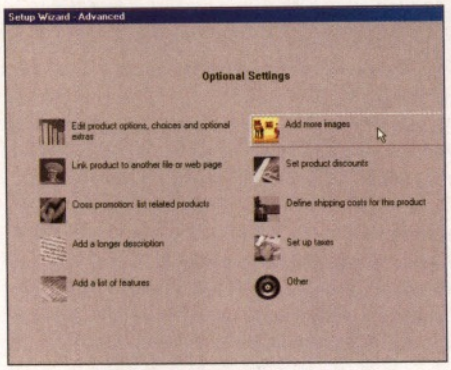
Power users' tip

THE SECRET TO building a decent Web site with the minimum of stress is all about organisation. For example, when working with the graphics for your pages, be sure to assemble them all into one dedicated folder. Also be careful to make sure that they have been sized and compressed correctly for optimum performance when it comes to publishing the finished pages. If you simply place images all over your desktop there is a very good chance that you'll select the wrong ones and bog the site down with images that are not correctly compressed.



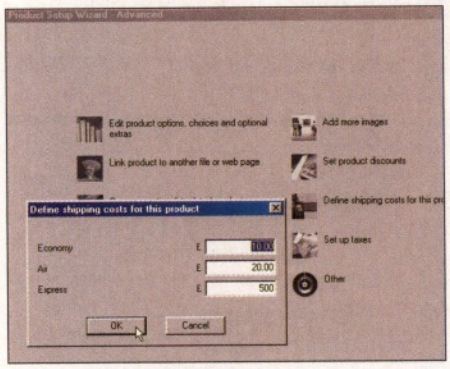
13 Picking products

Once you have your individual departments in place, they appear on the left-hand side of your screen. To add stock for sale, go to the 'Product' tab. Specify all the necessary details in much the same way as your created your original site pages.


Setup Wizard - Advanced
Optional Settings
Edit product options, choices and optional extras
Add more images
Link product to another file or web page
Set product discounts
Cross promotion: list related products
Define shipping costs for this product
Add a longer description
Set up taxes
Add a list of features
Other

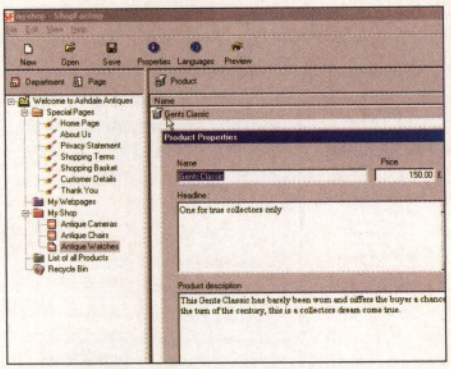
14 Further settings

If you repeat the process, you'll be taken to an 'Optional Settings' area. You can tweak all manner of settings here, add extra images of the product in question or configure fees like postage and applicable taxes.



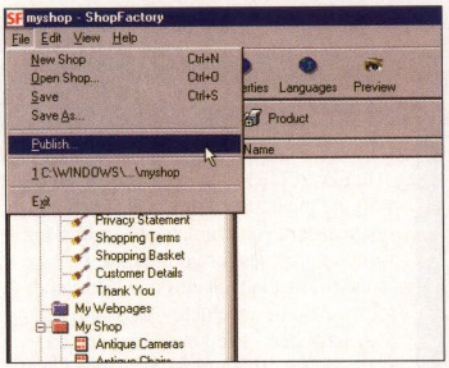
15 Pricing structure

Click the setting you need to edit and a dialog box will appear. Here, we're showing the shipping costs box, where you type in the amount needed. These pricing details will be added to the product in question once you click 'OK'.



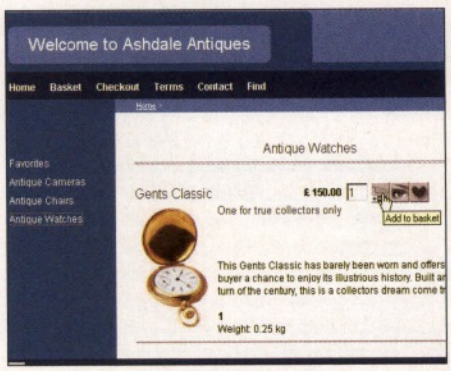
16 Add other products

Each time you add a new item to your stock list, it appears in the top left-hand corner of the main interface window. If you wish to add stock to other departments, click the department on the left and proceed as before.



17 Ready to publish

There are a couple of routes you can use for publishing your pages on the Web. The easiest way is to use the 'File' menu and select the 'Publish' option. Then follow the steps in order to send all of your assembled files to a Web server.



18 The finished article

Here's our finished Web page. All of the details we typed in earlier are there, along with a picture and the pricing and weight details. If someone wants to order the product, all they need to do is click on the 'Add to shopping cart' tab.

Jargon buster

GIF

This stands for Graphic Interchange File and is the perfect format for logos and other solid colour graphics that can be used on the Web. These files can also be heavily compressed, meaning that they load quickly when viewed online.

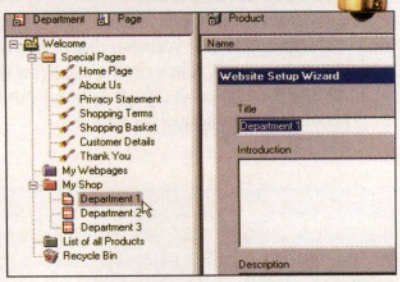
JPEG

The JPEG, or Joint Photographic Experts Group file format, is more suited to photographic images that need to be used on the Web. This is because you can compress JPEGs on a sliding scale, making it possible to strike a decent compromise between quality and size, which affects the all-important loading time.

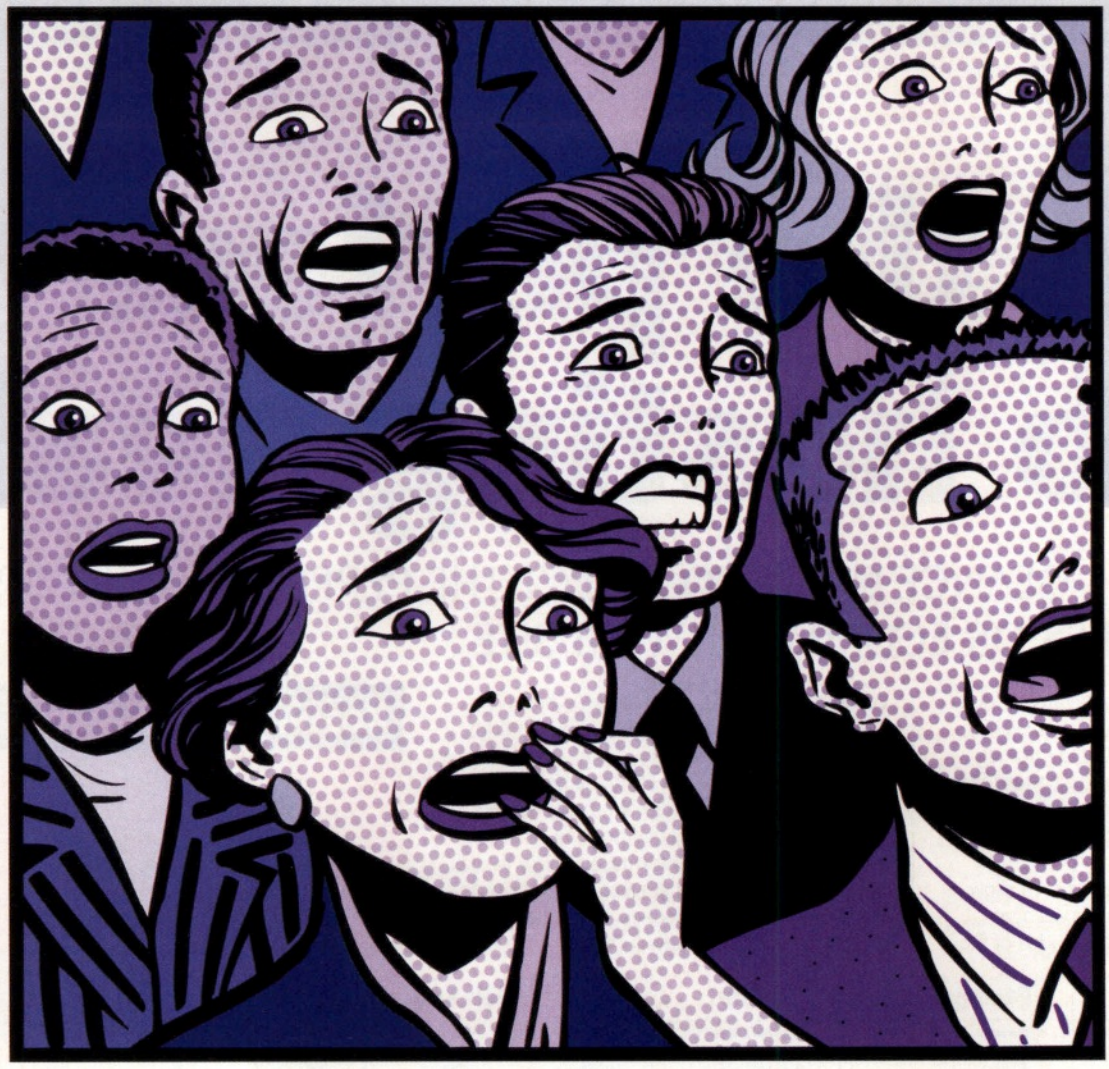
Publishing

This is the part of the construction process that will get your finished pages onto the Web so you can start trading. In order to publish a site, you need some Web space – most ISPs offer this and quite often for free. Alternatively, you can sign up with a Web hosting company for a professional approach.

Power users' tip



EVERY PART OF the construction process can be controlled from the main interface window within ShopFactory. However, in order to keep an eye on how it is all shaping up, use the window on the far left-hand side of the program in order to see what is happening. Each time you save your site, such as a new department, you will see it added to this pane. To further edit any of these areas, all you need to do is double-click on the item in question and the step-by-step editing process can be updated. You can also delete any unwanted areas of your site here and they will then be moved to the Trash can found at the bottom of the displayed list.



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Pick the perfect Web hosting deal

USE THIS AT-A-GLANCE GUIDE TO SELECT THE PERFECT HOME FOR YOUR BUSINESS OR ECOMMERCE WEB SITE

SELECTING A WEB hosting company to look after your business is just as tricky as picking the right ISP to connect you to the Internet. There's a baffling array of deals to choose from, each offering slightly different services and each charging slightly different prices. In short, there's no simple answer.

Our aim in compiling this guide is to allow you to see the different types of packages available and help you glean some idea of the costs you're likely to face. While we haven't included every single deal offered by the firms included (we could probably fill the whole of YBO with them) we have listed the products that we think are most relevant to our readers.

To use these listings effectively we recommend using the information below to pick out a handful of firms that cater for your needs. The next step is to contact each directly to discuss your requirements further.

Keeping up-to-date

WHILE WE TRY and ensure that all the information in our listings is up to date, the occasional error does creep through. If you would like to update your current details, drop an email to **pi@paragon.co.uk** with the information you would like changed.

NAME	URL	Package	Phone	Cost	Web space	POP3 Accounts	FrontPage Extensions	Phone Support
1&1 Internet	www.oneandone.co.uk	Starters	0845 6012 586	£17.88	Yes	15	No	Yes
1&1 Internet	www.oneandone.co.uk	Home	0845 6012 586	£59.88	100Mb	50	No	Yes
1&1 Internet	www.oneandone.co.uk	Business	0845 6012 586	£107.88	300Mb	200	Yes	Yes
1&1 Internet	www.oneandone.co.uk	Professionals	0845 6012 586	£203.88	800Mb	500	Yes	Yes
1&1 Internet	www.oneandone.co.uk	Starters	0845 6012 586	£17.88	Yes	15	No	Yes
1&1 Internet	www.oneandone.co.uk	Home	0845 6012 586	£59.88	100Mb	50	No	Yes
1&1 Internet	www.oneandone.co.uk	Business	0845 6012 586	£107.88	300Mb	200	Yes	Yes
1&1 Internet	www.oneandone.co.uk	Professionals	0845 6012 586	£203.88	800Mb	500	Yes	Yes
123-reg	www.123-reg.co.uk	Regular	0900 22 11 123	£45.87	250Mb	10	Yes	Yes
123-reg	www.123-reg.co.uk	Xtra	0900 22 11123	£69.87	500Mb	25	Yes	Yes
2020Media	www.2020media.com	Standard	0870 739 2020	£100.00	100Mb	15	Yes	Yes
2020Media	www.2020media.com	PHP	0870 739 2020	£150.00	100Mb	15	No	Yes
2020Media	www.2020media.com	Cold Fusion	0870 739 2020	£250.00	100Mb	15	No	Yes
2020Media	www.2020media.com	Java	0870 739 2020	£300.00	100Mb	15	No	Yes
4d Hosting	www.4dhosting.com	Bronze	0845 1668386	£20	10Mb	2	Yes	No
4d Hosting	www.4dhosting.com	Silver	0845 1668386	£64.99	25Mb	10	Yes	Yes
4d Hosting	www.4dhosting.com	Bronze	0845 1668386	£79.99	50Mb	20	Yes	Yes
9NetAvenue	www.9netave.uk.net	9Net ONE Plan	0800 328 9450	£239.40	25Mb	10	No	Yes
9NetAvenue	www.9netave.uk.net	Starter	0800 328 9450	£99	50Mb	10	Yes	Yes
9NetAvenue	www.9netave.uk.net	Professional	0800 328 9450	£199	100Mb	25	Yes	Yes
9NetAvenue	www.9netave.uk.net	Corporate	0800 328 9450	£399	500Mb	100	Yes	Yes
Active ISP	www.activeisp.co.uk	Small Business	0870 7304000	£143.40	35Mb	10	Yes	Yes
AMEN hosting	www.amen.uk.com	promo WebPRO	None	£6	100Mb	10	Yes	No
AMEN hosting	www.amen.uk.com	regular WebPRO	None	£54	100Mb	10	Yes	No
AQ Limited	www.a-q.co.uk	10Mb	08707 449227	£70.00	10Mb	1	No	No
AQ Limited	www.a-q.co.uk	20Mb	08707 449227	£122.00	20Mb	5	No	No
AQ Limited	www.a-q.co.uk	50Mb	08707 449227	£190.00	50Mb	5	No	No
A Web Company	www.awebcompany.net	5Mb Webspace	020 8399 6675	£39.99	5Mb	1	No	No
A Web Company	www.awebcompany.net	10Mb Webspace	020 8399 6675	£59.99	10Mb	3	No	No
A Web Company	www.awebcompany.net	25Mb Webspace	020 8399 6675	£99.99	25Mb	5	No	No
A Web Company	www.awebcompany.net	50Mb Webspace	020 8399 6675	£149.99	50MB	7	No	No
A Web Company	www.awebcompany.net	100Mb Webspace	020 8399 6675	£199.99	100Mb	10	No	Yes
A Web Company	www.awebcompany.net	250Mb Web space	020 8399 6675	£349.99	250Mb	15	No	Yes
A Web Company	www.awebcompany.net	500Mb Webspace	020 8399 6675	£499.99	500Mb	20	No	Yes
Business Serve	www.businessserve.co.uk	Business Serve Pro	08707 555565	£99.95	25Mb	5	Yes	Yes
Business Serve	www.businessserve.co.uk	Business Serve Premier	08707 555565	£199.95	50Mb	10	Yes	Yes
Business Serve	www.businessserve.co.uk	Business Serve Enterprise	08707 555565	£349.95	100Mb	20	Yes	Yes
Business Serve	www.businessserve.co.uk	Business Serve Enterprise NT	08707 555565	£399.95	100Mb	20	Yes	Yes
Clara.net	www.clara.net	clarahost Light	0845 355 1000	£29.99	10Mb	10	No	No
Clara.net	www.clara.net	clarahost Starter	0845 355 1000	£59.99	50Mb	20	Yes	No
Clara.net	www.clara.net	clarahost Soho	0845 355 1000	£99.00	100Mb	50	Yes	Yes
Clara.net	www.clara.net	clarahost Enterprise	0845 355 1000	£199.00	200Mb	100	Yes	Yes
Clara.net	www.clara.net	clarahost Professional	0845 355 1000	£399.00	500Mb	200	Yes	Yes
Clara.net	www.clara.net	clarahost Advanced	0845 355 1000	£699.00	500Mb	200	Yes	Yes
Don Host	www.donhost.co.uk	Enterprise Plan	0870 7414151	£89.99	100Mb	20	Yes	Yes
Don Host	www.donhost.co.uk	Commerce Plan	0870 7414151	£179.99	250Mb	50	Yes	Yes
Bargain Host	www.bargainhost.co.uk	Budget Host	None	£12.99	35Mb	1	No	No
Bargain Host	www.bargainhost.co.uk	Budget Host Pro	None	£22.99	50Mb	Unlimited	Yes	No
Fast Hosts	www.fasthosts.co.uk	Home User	01452 541260	£60.00	200Mb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Fast Hosts	www.fasthosts.co.uk	Business User	01452 541260	£199.00	200Mb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Freezone	www.freezone.co.uk	Freezone Value	0845 1170366	£71.40	30Mb	1	Yes	Yes
Freezone	www.freezone.co.uk	Freezone Classic Unix	0845 1170366	£119.40	50Mb	10	Yes	Yes

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Freezone	www.freezone.co.uk	Freezone Classic NT	0845 1170366	£119.40	50Mb	10	Yes	Yes
Ghoulnet	www.ghoulnet.co.uk	Business Web	0800 0747581	£69.00	100Mb	50	Yes	No
Gio Internet	www.giointernet.com	Bronze Hosting	0870 922 4000	£70.50	50Mb	5	£50/year	Yes
Gio Internet	www.giointernet.com	Silver Hosting	0870 922 4000	£264.38	100Mb	10	£50/year	Yes
Gio Internet	www.giointernet.com	Gold Hosting	0870 922 4000	£346.63	250Mb	50	£50/year	Yes
Griffin Internet	www.griffin.net.uk	Windows 2000 Webspace	0870 0007100	£199	150Mb	100	Yes	Yes
Hostway	www.hostway-uk.com	Professional	0800 1801880	£89.00	200Mb	20	Yes	Yes
Hostway	www.hostway-uk.com	Business	0800 1801880	£179.00	400Mb	40	Yes	Yes
Inweb Networks	www.inweb.co.uk	Unix Business Package + Free DialUp	08000 612 222	£200.00 pa	100MB	One	Yes	Yes
Inweb Networks	www.inweb.co.uk	NT Business Package + Free Dial Up	08000 612 222	£400 pa	50MB	One	Yes	Yes
Iomart	www.iomart.com	NT Core Hosting 30	0870 0500303	£179.88	30Mb	10	Yes	Yes
Iomart	www.iomart.com	NT Core Hosting 50	0870 0500303	£239.88	50Mb	10	Yes	Yes
Iomart	www.iomart.com	NT Core Hosting 75	0870 0500303	£359.88	75Mb	10	Yes	Yes
Iomart	www.iomart.com	NT Core Hosting 100	0870 0500303	£1199.88	100Mb	10	Yes	Yes
Joshua Internet	www.joshuainternet.com	Starter	None	£46.41	35Mb	10	Yes	No
Joshua Internet	www.joshuainternet.com	Standard	None	£92.82	80Mb	25	Yes	No
Joshua Internet	www.joshuainternet.com	Professional	None	£185.64	200Mb	60	Yes	No
KCDnet	www.kcdnet.com	Personal	None	£29.99	50Mb	1	Yes	No
KCDnet	www.kcdnet.com	Advanced	None	£89.99	100Mb	4	Yes	No
KCDnet	www.kcdnet.com	Executive	None	£159.99	200Mb	10	Yes	No
Magic Moments	www.magic-moments.com	Magic Entry	0115 9170000	£99.95	250MB	1	No	Yes
Magic Moments	www.magic-moments.com	Magic Pro	0115 9170000	£199.95	750Mb	100	Yes	Yes
Magic Moments	www.magic-moments.com	Magic Business	0115 9170000	£199	250Mb	100	Yes	Yes
Magic Moments	www.magic-moments.com	Magic Business eCommerce	0115 9170000	£499	250Mb	100	Yes	Yes
Mailbox	www.mailbox.net.uk	WebStandard	0845 177345	£100	25Mb	0	Yes	Yes
Mailbox	www.mailbox.net.uk	WebGold	0845 177345	£200	50Mb	15	Yes	Yes
Mailbox	www.mailbox.net.uk	WebPro	0845 177345	£300	25Mb	25	Yes	Yes
Mailbox	www.mailbox.net.uk	WebSecure	0845 177345	£250	25Mb	0	Yes	Yes
Metronet	www.metronet.co.uk	Toe in the water	020 8426 4446	£49.00	None	None	Yes	Yes
Metronet	www.metronet.co.uk	Going for a paddle	020 8426 4446	£139.00	10Mb	5	Yes	Yes
Metronet	www.metronet.co.uk	Dive, dive, dive	020 8426 4446	£287.00	10Mb	5	Yes	Yes
Namehog	www.namehog.net	Small Business	0870 9059444	£42.00	100Mb	20	Yes	Yes
Namehog	www.namehog.net	Business Pro	0870 9059444	£60.00	200Mb	25	Yes	Yes
NetBenefit	www.netbenefit.com	Shared Hosting Package	0800 0724696	£180.00	100Mb	None	Yes	Yes
Netcetera	www.inetc.net	Homeuser	0800 2987214	£60.00	100Mb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Netcetera	www.inetc.net	Commerce	0800 2987214	£180.00	200Mb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Netcetera	www.inetc.net	Reseller	0800 2987214	£450.00	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
NetNation	www.netnation.co.uk	Starter	0800 0283639	£131.40	20Mb	1	Yes	No
NetNation	www.netnation.co.uk	Pro	0800 0283639	£191.40	150Mb	20	Yes	No
NetNation	www.netnation.co.uk	Power	0800 0283639	£419.40	300Mb	40	Yes	No
Netway	www.netway.co.uk	Small to medium business	07020 939842	£199.00	20Mb	1	Yes	Yes
Oscura Ltd	www.oscura.co.uk	Business Development Hosting	0118 959 7200	£150	25Mb	6	Yes	Yes
Oscura Ltd	www.oscura.co.uk	Business Premium Hosting	0118 959 7200	£350	100MB	6	Yes	Yes
PMHIS.Net	www.pmhis.net	Web+	None	£60.00	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	No
Positive Internet Co	www.positive-internet.com	Shared Hosting	0800 316006	£250.00	120Mb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Powas Park	www.powaspark.net	Valuespace	0870 7303170	£49.99	100Mb	50	No	Yes
Powas Park	www.powaspark.net	Optisapce	0870 7303170	£99.99	IGb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Powas Park	www.powaspark.net	Commercespace	0870 7303170	£199.99	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Simply.Com	www.simply.com	Simply Basic	01684 893020	£49.99	10Mb	0	No	No
Simply.Com	www.simply.com	Simply Soho	01684 893020	£69.99	50Mb	1	Yes	No
Simply.Com	www.simply.com	Simply Enterprise	01684 893020	£99.99	100Mb	10	Yes	No
Simply.Com	www.simply.com	Simply Corporate	01684 893020	£149.99	200Mb	20	Yes	No
Shared Knowledge	www.sharedknowledge.net	Entry	01707 885800	£99.99	40Mb	Unlimited	Yes	No
Shared Knowledge	www.sharedknowledge.net	Personal	01707 885800	£99.99	80Mb	Unlimited	Yes	No
Shared Knowledge	www.sharedknowledge.net	Small Business	01707 885800	£249.99	200Mb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Shared Knowledge	www.sharedknowledge.net	Net Business	01707 885800	£399.99	400Mb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Shared Knowledge	www.sharedknowledge.net	Executive	01707 885800	£499.99	400Mb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Shared Knowledge	www.sharedknowledge.net	Executive E-Commerce	01707 885800	£799.99	600Mb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Sonnet	www.sonnet.co.uk	Solo Lite 24/7	N/A	£180	25Mb	25	Yes	Yes
Sonnet	www.sonnet.co.uk	Dial4Business	N/A	£120	50Mb	25	Yes	Yes
Sonnet	www.sonnet.co.uk	Solo Daytime	N/A	£180	50Mb	50	Yes	Yes
Sonnet	www.sonnet.co.uk	Solo 24/7	N/A	£300	50Mb	50	Yes	Yes
Sonnet	www.sonnet.co.uk	Symphony	N/A	£660	100Mb	50	Yes	Yes
Strongnet	www.strongnet.co.uk	Various	01703 866006	Various	50Mb	Unlimited	Unlimited	No
Supanames	www.supanames.co.uk	Value Host	0870 1257678	£13.99	35Mb	1	No	Yes
Supanames	www.supanames.co.uk	Value Host Pro	0870 1257678	£23.99	35Mb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Tigress UK	www.tigress-uk.com	Web50	0870 321 9528	£69.99	50Mb	3	No	Yes
UK Hosting	www.ukhosting.co.uk	5 megs	0845 082 0696	£55.00	20Mb	1	Yes	Yes
UK Hosting	www.ukhosting.co.uk	10 megs	0845 082 0696	£95.00	20Mb	1	Yes	Yes
UK Hosting	www.ukhosting.co.uk	20 megs	0845 082 0696	£125.00	20Mb	1	Yes	Yes
ValueWebHosts	www.valuewebhosts.com	Plan 1	n/a	£8.99	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	No
Verio	www.verio.co.uk	Starter	020 7767 3700	£109.45	10Mb	2	Yes	Yes
Verio	www.verio.co.uk	Designer	020 7767 3700	£197.45	50Mb	20	Yes	Yes
Verio	www.verio.co.uk	Business	020 7767 3700	£274.45	125Mb	40	Yes	Yes
Verio	www.verio.co.uk	Commerce	020 7767 3700	£384.45	175Mb	60	Yes	Yes
Virtual Internet	www.vi.net	Host	0800 11 77 44	£120	25Mb	12	Yes	Yes
Virtual Internet	www.vi.net	Business	0800 11 77 44	£215	50Mb	30	Yes	Yes
Virtual Internet	www.vi.net	Professional	0800 11 77 44	£480	250Mb	120	Yes	Yes
Virtual Internet	www.vi.net	Professional Plus	0800 11 77 44	£1980	250Mb	120	Yes	Yes
Web Fusion	www.webfusion.co.uk	WebFusion Entry	0115 917 0000	£99.95	250Mb	1	No	Yes
Web Fusion	www.webfusion.co.uk	WebFusion Pro	0115 917 0000	£199.95	750Mb	100	Yes	Yes
Web Fusion	www.webfusion.co.uk	WebFusion Business Pro	0115 917 0000	£199.00	250Mb	100	Yes	Yes
Web Fusion	www.webfusion.co.uk	WebFusion Business E-Commerce	0115 917 0000	£499.00	250Mb	100	Yes	Yes
Web Tapestry	www.webtapestry.co.uk	Basic Hosting	0800 0151718	£35.00	10Mb	1	Yes	Yes
Web Tapestry	www.webtapestry.co.uk	Economy Hosting	0800 0151718	£50.00	25Mb	2	Yes	Yes
Web Tapestry	www.webtapestry.co.uk	Senior Hostings	0800 0151718	£125.00	50Mb	5	Yes	Yes
Web Tapestry	www.webtapestry.co.uk	Executive Hostings	0800 0151718	£200.00	100Mb	10	Yes	Yes
Web Warehouse	www.web-warehouse.net	Entry	0845 126 0325	£40.00	25Mb	5	Yes	Yes
Web Warehouse	www.web-warehouse.net	Professional	0845 126 0325	£59.99	50	25	Yes	Yes
Web Warehouse	www.web-warehouse.net	Entry	0845 126 0325	£40.00	200Mb	100	Yes	Yes
Xsession	www.xsession.com	Personal Hosting	01784 460896	£39.00	25Mb	20	Yes	No
Xsession	www.xsession.com	Business Hosting	01784 460896	£94.00	200Mb	100	Yes	No
Xsession	www.xsession.com	Premium Hosting	01784 460896	£350.00	500Mb	350	Yes	No
Zebra Hosts.net	www.zebrahosts.net	Package 1	0845 4584200	£50.00	5Mb	0	No	No
Zebra Hosts.net	www.zebrahosts.net	Package 2	0845 4584200	£100.00	25Mb	0	Yes	No
Zebra Hosts.net	www.zebrahosts.net	Package 3	0845 4584200	£175.00	50Mb	1	Yes	No
Zebra Hosts.net	www.zebrahosts.net	Package 4	0845 4584200	£500.00	100Mb	5	Yes	Yes
Zen Internet	www.zenwebhosting.com	RaQ 4i 128	0870 6000971	£1,140	20Gb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Zen Internet	www.zenwebhosting.com	RaQ 4i 256	0870 6000971	£1,740	20Gb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Zen Internet	www.zenwebhosting.com	RaQ 4i 512	0870 6000971	£2,340	40Gb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Zen Internet	www.zenwebhosting.com	RaQ4r 256	0870 6000971	£2,3400	20Gb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Zen Internet	www.zenwebhosting.com	RaQ 4r 512	0870 6000971	£2,940	40Gb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
Zen Internet	www.zenwebhosting.com	RaQ XTR 128	0870 6000971	£3,540	30Gb Unlimited	Yes	Yes	Yes
Zen Internet	www.zenwebhosting.com	RaQ XTR 1Gb	0870 6000971	£4,740	80Gb	Unlimited	Yes	Yes
ZyWeb Business	www.zyweb.com	ZyWeb Business	01392 209500	£210.00	30Mb	10	No	No

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1 the storage and diffusion of web based content for access via wider area networks.

2 a reliable, scaleable, feature rich service from **Hostway**. *See www.hostway-uk.com*

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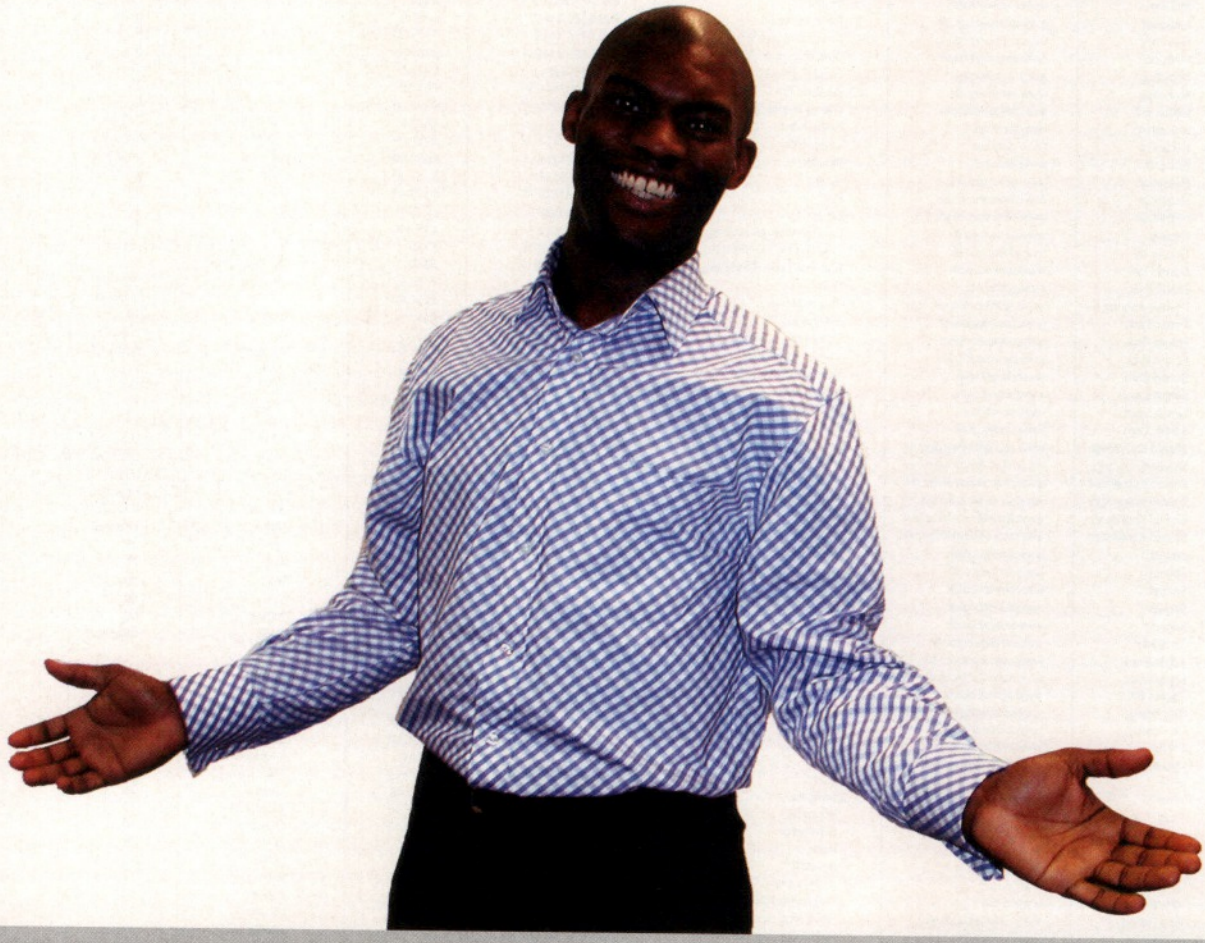

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Reviews

YOUR ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO ALL THE LATEST INTERNET SOFTWARE AND HARDWARE

Welcome...

AS THE SUMMER comes, there's never a better time to get out and about with a digicam and capture some golden moments. The beauty of the digital format is that you can share these moments quicker and more easily than with cumbersome, lengthy film development.

You'll want to impress when you upload your snaps to the Web, which is where the new Paint Shop Pro 8 comes into play. The long-awaited release is finally upon us, and we put its wizardry to the test on page 110.

You'll need something decent to capture your pictures with, and Minolta's powerful new Dimage F300 could be the answer. Find out if it makes the grade on page 114.

Other highlights this month include a glimpse at ViewSonic's SmartDisplay, plus a budget image editor and a gorgeous widescreen PC.

James Thornton, Features Editor

On test this issue...

110 **Paint Shop Pro 8**
Two years in the making, we ask if the new version makes the grade

114 **Minolta Dimage F300**
With a five megapixel resolution, this could be your photo saviour

115 **WEBSmith 1.3**
Struggling for a Web presence? Allow WEBSmith to lead the way

117 **PhotoSuite 5 Platinum**
Does this wizard-based tool offer enough in the way of solutions?

118 **ViewSonic V110**
Enter the wireless world with this completely portable Smart Display

120 **Hi-Grade Notino W6700**
Perfect for movies, or does this widescreen laptop offer more?

120 **AVG Anti-Virus**
We test the commercial version of the once freeware virus package

How our ratings work

Practical Internet ★★ STAR BUY ★★ — A truly excellent product you should buy now. Given to scores of 90% or above

Practical Internet RECOMMENDED — It's great, but not totally essential to your well-being. 85% or above

p110

p118

p115

Paint Shop Pro 8

SEE WHAT'S NEW IN JASC'S LONG-AWAITED UPDATE TO ITS IMAGE-EDITING SOFTWARE FOR THE PC

It's been a couple of years since Paint Shop Pro has been revised. The last version introduced many new features to the popular image-editing program, and for this reason you can forgive the fact that it's taken so long to advance upon what was already a superb application. But improved it has been, and quite considerably, too.

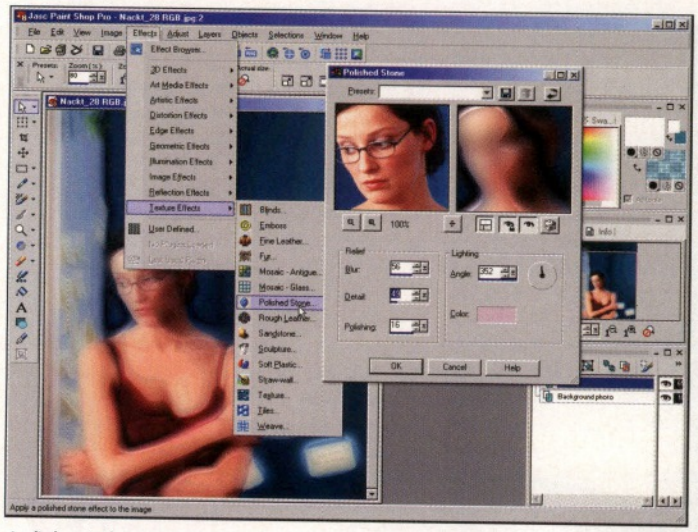
For starters, the interface is markedly different. Depending on your particular penchant for docking palettes and the like, the changes could be perceived as a marked improvement. Docking palettes give those with two monitors the chance to detach all the tools from the bars and put them on the other screen. Even if you're not among those fortuitous folk, being able to customise your environment does help, because you only need to have the palettes that you use regularly open. Given that you can tweak the interface, it makes sense that PSP now includes a facility for storing your workspace, so your palettes always open where you want them.

More than just looks

Important though interfaces are, we shan't dwell too long on the way stuff is presented, but more on the fun aspects of the program; what you can do with it in terms of editing pictures. Pausing briefly to evaluate PSP's Web tools, it still has special GIF, PNG and JPEG export functions (replete with optional step-by-step wizards), which have comprehensive settings to optimise your pictures ready to put on your site. There are also Image Slicer and Image Mapper tools for building Internet interactivity into your images. Neither of these has changed drastically from the previous version, which is perhaps a missed opportunity to make them more comprehensive. Nevertheless, they're still useful tools.

One major new addition to the program is a really scary-looking, but infinitely useful scripting tool (see new features box), which allows you to build up a collection of edits into one simple menu function. Other noteworthy additions to Paint Shop Pro are that it now supports the more advanced JPEG2000 format, and will even retain and allow you to write additional EXIF data from photographs imported from a digital camera. The batch converter will also run one of the aforementioned scripts as it swaps your pictures from one format to another (so you could convert the colour profile from RGB to CMYK, for example), and it will also change the filename automatically, according to what criteria you specify.

New code has been written for the plug-in module, meaning Paint Shop Pro 8 is able to read many more Photoshop-compatible plug-ins than ever before. On a related note, it also does a much better job of reading native Photoshop format files than previous versions, and is much more tolerant of features it does not support (such as layer effects).



Applied sparingly, even seemingly insane effects can work wonders on photos

Picture fiddler

The features added in version seven for tidying up digital photographs are still present. These include some remarkably useful correction and enhancement tools, such as red-eye removal (which uses a library of editable eyes to mask the redness, rather than trying to actually remove it), and a one-click tool for fixing common photographic ailments. Despite its one-size-fits-all approach, the latter is surprisingly good. Besides which, you can always access all of these colour, detail, and contrast correction tools separately if you need to make fine adjustments.

For finishing off your photos ready for presentation, there are some great new picture frames. These not only include actual images of frames in which to encapsulate your photographs, but

also masking outlines to create fuzzy or brushed edges. In fact, PSP8 makes it much easier to export your own images to use as picture frames.

For those with a more creative bent, there are many more filters and tools in this version to excite users, including some fantastic lens distortion effects, a mesh warp for pushing and pulling your picture all over the place, and plenty of other shape weirdness. There's also a smart magnifying glass that renders a zoomed-in portion of your picture. This is great for effects and especially for focusing attention on parts of diagrams.

Other effects groups include texture-based, art media (pencils and the like), 3D and other inventive artistic dabbling. And unlike before, where you would need to convert your 8-bit colour images to true colour in order to apply a filter, Paint Shop Pro now does this automatically (it does prompt, though).

Nearly all of the filters, effects and processors have facilities whereby any settings you make can be saved as a new preset. Additionally, many filters also have a 'Dice' button that randomly selects values for each of the variables. This is useful if you're not sure what you're doing, or you just want to experiment with the effect. The Preview mode has been improved too, with a button to enable you to quickly scroll around the image to see how its been affected. Of course, you can still use the Preview button to see it first hand in the actual image.

However, if you don't even know what effect to apply, there's a tremendously useful filter browser.

"THERE ARE MANY MORE FILTERS AND TOOLS IN THIS VERSION TO EXCITE USERS"

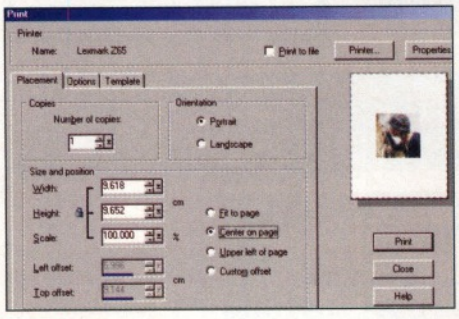
This creates thumbnail previews of the effect rendered on the currently selected image, so you can quickly see what it will do. It does take a short while to process the many effects, but these thumbnails are then stored in a cache for faster retrieval later on.

Create your own

Paint Shop Pro isn't just for manipulating digital images. There are plenty of tools for drawing images from scratch, too. For starters, the New Image dialog box has been worked over to offer an increased amount of options, including more flexible canvas background options. It now allows you to pick any colour, pattern, or gradient from the program's palette, or to use a transparent background (which is ideal for creating buttons and suchlike).

In terms of brushes, there are plenty of standard and advanced paintbrushes, pens and shapes. →

The dazzling new features in PSP8

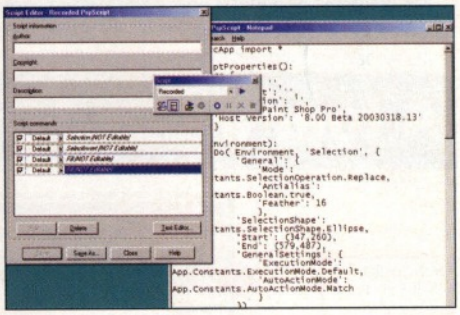


1 Printing

You can now use the Print dialog to scale an image or position it on a page. The multiple image print tool is still in this version, though it's called Print Layout. Drag any of the open documents onto a range of pre-defined page sizes and print them.

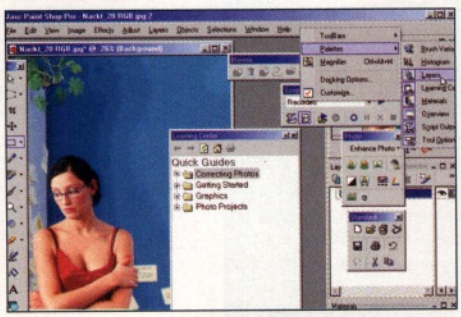
2 Filter browser

To help you choose the desired filter, Paint Shop Pro has a wonderful filter browser that provides thumbnail previews of your image as it would be if you applied the filter. From the browser you can apply the filter, or open the dialog to edit the settings.



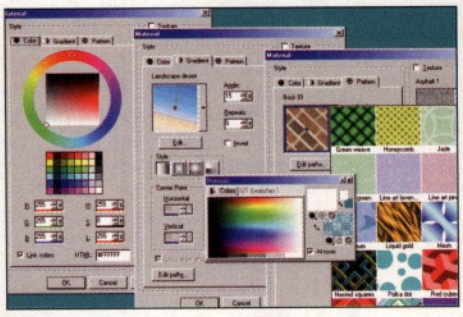
3 Scripts

Paint Shop Pro now has a scripting engine, which is based upon the Python programming language. Using its script editor you can either record events and copy them into one command, or write scripts from scratch.



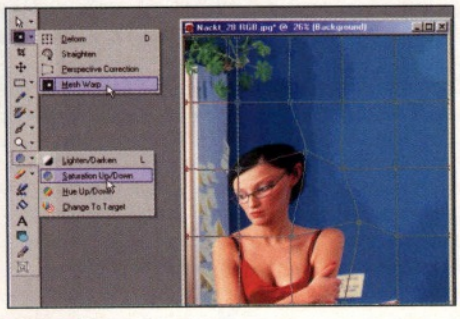
4 Customising the interface

With so many different palettes and toolbars, getting all the buttons and options to fit into one window is pretty tricky. Paint Shop Pro now uses even more detachable boxes, which can either be fixed to the main window, or floated as separate palettes.



5 Materials palette

The Materials palette now allows you to store any colour, pattern, or gradient in a handy swatch. When you come to editing the colours or patterns, you'll find all the tools in one handy dialog box, which is much tidier than before.



6 New tools

You'll find a range of new features in the main toolbar, including: Straighten, a simple tool for correcting skewed scanned images; Perspective and Mesh Warp; and a Warp brush. There are also hue, saturation and contrast brushes.

Each has many characteristics that can be changed in order to recreate a certain painting style. These encompass attributes such as the paint density and opacity (how much of the undercoat seeps through), shapes (including some novel stroke patterns), and blend

"PSP IS COMPARABLE WITH PHOTOSHOP IN TERMS OF ITS TOOLS"

mode (which works in the same way as the layer modes). All of these settings can be saved, too.

The eraser now has two modes: the old mode, which takes its source colour from the Materials palette; and the new, more useful mode, which actually wipes the area and leaves behind a transparent background.

For diagrams or annotating technical drawings or photos, or just drawing shapes for buttons, there are some useful vector line tools. These enable you to draw and then reposition, resize and even massage their paths into the shapes you need. Although essentially the same as before, the vector functions still seem much better in version eight, with its easier access to editing of individual points.

The text tool has changed from previous revisions of the software, moving its controls from a modal dialog into the toolbar. However, it's not necessarily any easier to change the font properties than before, and it still doesn't allow you to type directly onto the page.

How good is it?

Jasc started developing Paint Shop Pro 12 years ago, during which time it has undergone some major revisions from its modest beginnings as an image viewer and converter. Nowadays it's comparable with Photoshop in terms of its photo-editing and picture manipulation

With PSP's Web tools you can slice an image into bits, and then apply links and rollover effects

tools. But despite this impressive repertoire, it still remains easier to use than Photoshop, and is far cheaper as well.

As such, Paint Shop Pro will doubtlessly appeal to both beginners who want something easy to understand and use, and the more accomplished digital image editors, who need a powerful program to give them a professional look to their Web graphics. For those who are used to the phenomenon that is Paint Shop Pro, it is unlikely you'll be disappointed with this update. While there are substantial changes (mainly for the better), which may initially throw you off-balance (particularly keyboard shortcuts and the repositioning of many menu items), the software still retains its own inimitable style. It isn't easy to improve something that's already near-perfect, but Jasc has achieved it with Paint Shop Pro 8. ■

The verdict

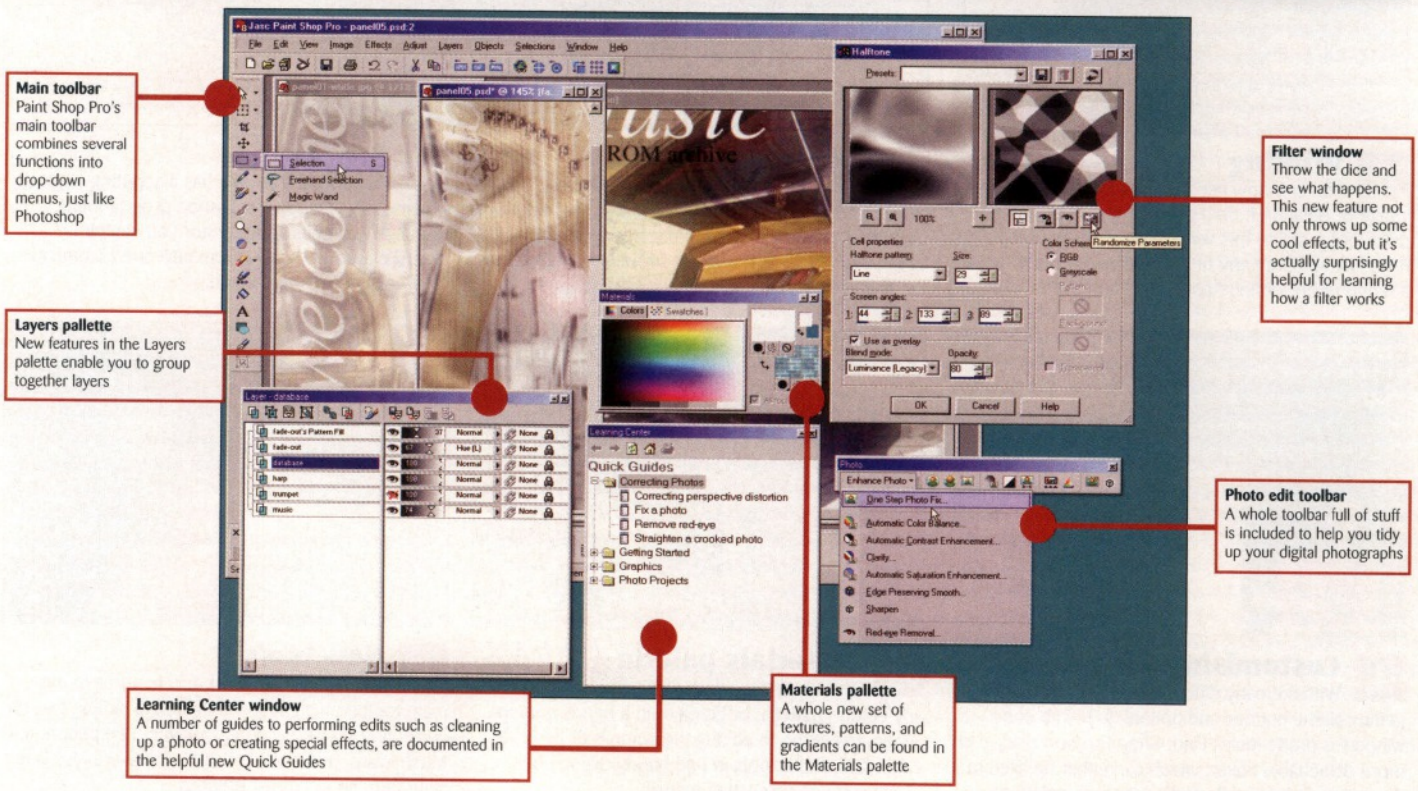
SOFTWARE: Jasc Paint Shop Pro 8
PRICE: £99.95
TEL: 0870 120 2186
URL: www.digitalworkshop.com

FEATURES: ★★★★★
EASE OF USE: ★★★★½
VALUE: ★★★★½
OVERALL **90%**

✔ Jasc has managed to create a program that's easy to use and yet still enormously powerful and flexible

✖ Selecting colours and patterns, and vector shape drawing and editing may initially seem confusing. Still not able to type directly onto the picture

A tour around the PSP8 interface


Main toolbar
Paint Shop Pro's main toolbar combines several functions into drop-down menus, just like Photoshop
Layers pallette
New features in the Layers palette enable you to group together layers
Filter window
Throw the dice and see what happens. This new feature not only throws up some cool effects, but it's actually surprisingly helpful for learning how a filter works
Photo edit toolbar
A whole toolbar full of stuff is included to help you tidy up your digital photographs
Learning Center window
A number of guides to performing edits such as cleaning up a photo or creating special effects, are documented in the helpful new Quick Guides
Materials pallette
A whole new set of textures, patterns, and gradients can be found in the Materials palette

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Minolta Dimage F300

WITH A WIDE RANGE OF FEATURES AND FIVE MEGAPIXEL RESOLUTION, THIS DIMINUTIVE DIGICAM LOOK SET TO BE A WINNER

Practical internet RECOMMENDED

Not so long ago, a digital camera capable of five megapixel resolution was the preserve of the serious professional and would set you back more than a grand. Now however, the most up-to-date technology is included in cameras that are tumbling in price.

Minolta's new Dimage F300 is just such a camera. The images produced by its five megapixel sensor can be comfortably blown up to 8.5 x 6.5 inches with no loss of quality, which can't be claimed for many digicams currently on the market. With overall dimensions of 11 x 5 x 3cm, it's compact enough to pop in your pocket and carry almost anywhere, while its sleek silver casing means it doesn't lose out in the style stakes.

The F300 is also very lightweight, and sits comfortably in the hand. The dial switches the camera on and also selects the different shooting modes, but its operation can be a little fiddly. While the viewfinder zooms in along with the lens (which is capable of 3x magnification) the actual view isn't that great, making the bright LCD monitor the best way of framing your shots.

Altered images

Of course, it's what's inside the camera that's most important, and budding snappers will be glad to hear that the Minolta offers a great deal of creative control over images in Manual mode. However, switching to Auto gives the camera the reins, and usually ensures some pretty nifty results. Auto settings include landscape, sunset, night portrait, and close-up modes while the built-in flash can be switched off or will compensate for red-eye.

Images can be captured in JPEG or TIFF format, and there are four different file quality settings. Pictures are stored on a 32Mb Secure Digital card which is supplied with the camera. Image quality is generally very good, with warm colour reproduction and an excellent degree of sharpness. However, in dark conditions the Minolta starts to struggle a little and images begin to look grainy, although to be fair, this problem is common to many digicams. Luckily, on-board editing controls enable you to carry out on-the-spot alterations to colour, contrast, sharpness and saturation.

Images aren't the F300's only stock in trade, however. It's possible to make movie clips of up to 20 minutes long, although the quality is nothing to write home about. Audio clips of up to 180 minutes long are possible too, depending on the size of the memory card you're using.

If the conditions are right, the Minolta can deliver beautiful, colour-rich images

Menu magic

The F300's menu system is easy to navigate using the arrow keys to scroll up and down. Playback mode offers information about each shot you've taken, including the date and time of the photograph as well as number in the series. You can also zoom in to check if the image is focused properly.

Power comes courtesy of a CR-V3 or two AA size batteries, but be prepared to stock up on them. The F300 guzzles power at an alarming rate, and the battery life icon on the top information LCD panel won't tell you they've run out until it's almost too late. Supplied in the box are connecting cables for your computer and television, as well as Minolta's capable Dimage Viewer editing software.

While £500 isn't cheap, it's nonetheless good value for a camera that will satisfy anyone demanding the highest possible image quality, and wanting to get to grips with creative control over their picture taking. If you're looking for a capable but compact digital camera with a wide range of features, then the Dimage F300 could be just the ticket. ■

The verdict

HARDWARE: Minolta Dimage F300
PRICE: £499.99
EMAIL: 01908 200400
URL: www.minolta.co.uk

FEATURES:	★★★★★	**OVERALL**
EASE OF USE:	★★★½☆	**85%**
VALUE:	★★★★½	

✔ Great image quality, wide range of features

✖ Very power hungry, sometimes fiddly operation

WEBSmith 1.3

IMPRESS YOUR VISITORS BY TURNING YOUR STATIC SITE INTO A DYNAMIC VISION

Creating an online store or company Web site is a notoriously difficult art form, and a whole load of people have tried to get in on the act, only to lose out due to poor build quality and lack of features. A lacklustre page is not enough for feature-hungry visitors these days, but fashioning complex dynamic sites isn't easy.

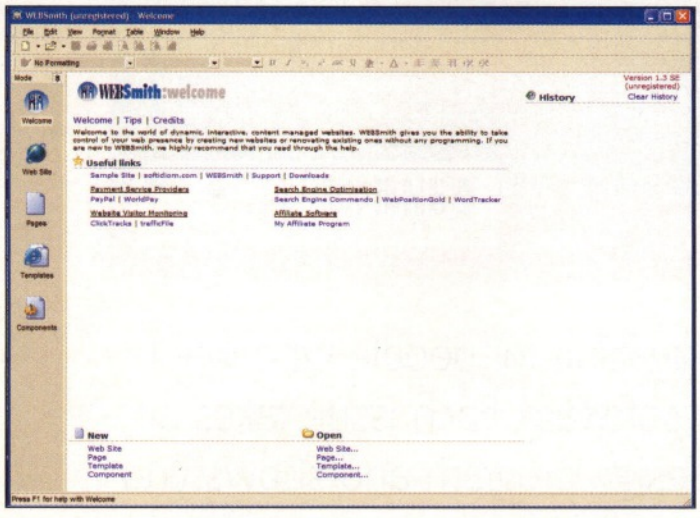
Thankfully, there are a host of programs out there designed to make the whole process that little bit easier. WEBSmith is one such package, and comes with a major aim – to help you build feature-rich, dynamic sites, even if you have a very limited knowledge of Web design.

It sounds daunting, but boot up WEBSmith and you'll be left feeling like you can achieve startling results. The program works on a simple premise – you define the site structure, tell the program where you want your pages to sit, then you can drag all manner of dynamic and static elements on to the site as you wish. Standard WYSIWYG rules apply for the most part, where you place elements on the page in pretty much the manner that they'll appear in visitors' Web browsers.

The real bonus of WEBSmith, however, comes in the dynamic aspect of its features. For the vast majority of part-time Web tinkerers, the prospect of setting up an online store is enough to send us scuttling back to the drawing board with our tail firmly between our legs. WEBSmith takes this as read, so does all of the hard work for you. If you want to add products or shopping carts to your site, then the choice is yours – all you need do is drag the relevant component on to the page.

Necessary component

Components form the major part of WEBSmith's armoury, and you'll understand why they're so fundamental to the program when you realise that it's these elements that help make your page dynamic. From automatically dating pages through to setting up logon procedures, everything is here to fashion your site.



Dynamic Web sites no longer have to be a pipe dream – WEBSmith sorts out static sites in no time

The components aren't strewn about in a haphazard way, either, but organised into sections that would generally fit the bill for most company sites. In this regard, you'll find a series of components based on adding a news page to your site – all designed to take the hard graft out of your hands, and allow you to spend your time more productively.

In essence, WEBSmith works like a smaller version of big players like Dreamweaver and GoLive. You'll find all of the template tools and site structure options to let you create your site in exactly the way you want. The main difference is that WEBSmith is designed solely to take static sites into the dynamic age. With this in mind, you can load a site into the program, then add your own dynamic content to suit your needs. This means that, if you tried to enter the dotcom boom a couple of years ago, only to leave your site to fester in a backwater of nowhere since it was created, you can now turn your original dull pamphlet into something altogether more entertaining and engaging for your readers. ■

The verdict

SOFTWARE: WEBSmith 1.3
PRICE: £125
TEL: N/A
URL: www.softidiom.com

FEATURES: ★★★★½
EASE OF USE: ★★★★½
VALUE: ★★★★½
OVERALL **81%**

✔ Easy-to-use program to generate dynamic Web sites in no time

✖ Doesn't have the same amount of features as your Dreamweavers

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50 Essential Photoshop Techniques Page 14
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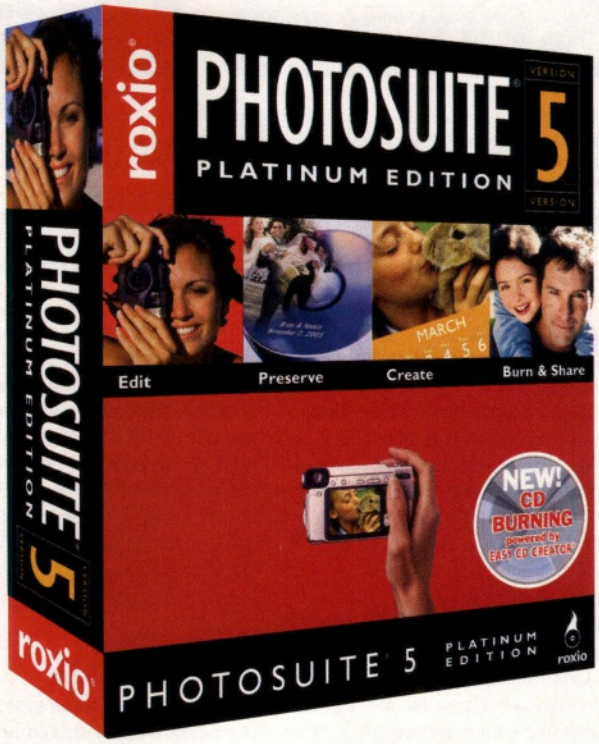
Issue 10
THE NUMBER ONE WEB CREATIVITY TOOL

Practical Web Projects is the magazine for people who want to master the latest Web creation software. Each issue takes an in-depth look at a leading Web design program and shows you how to build amazing Web sites and create stunning graphics

PhotoSuite 5 Platinum

DISAPPOINTED WITH YOUR DIGITAL CAMERA EFFORTS? FIX THEM UP ONCE AND FOR ALL WITH THIS IDIOT-PROOF IMAGE EDITOR



Just as Elton John can't stop spending money on flowers, Roxio is developing something of a habit for splashing out on floundering software producers. Not content with its acquisition of Napster, the CD-burning application developer has also snapped up MGI, makers of old favourites such as this photo-editing suite.

This resurrection of the program represents a slight change of tack, and it is now squarely aimed at the beginner market. The new features are designed to make it dead easy to organise, edit, create and share photo projects.

The first thing you'll notice is the program's unique interface, which is far removed from its major rivals like Paint Shop Pro and Photoshop Elements. Instead of having a series of tools arranged around a document window, PhotoSuite offers a simpler structure approach. As a result, it's easy to get to grips with the program simply by selecting either Transfer, Edit & Create, Print & Share, or View, Organize and Archive from the front page of the interface.

The wizard-based system in PhotoSuite 5 means that you can achieve great results in seconds

The Transfer mode speaks for itself, allowing you to retrieve images from a digicam or a scanner and transfer them onto your machine in a jiffy. The meatiest section of the program is undoubtedly the Edit & Create collection of tools. By entering Edit mode you can make all the usual changes to your photos that we've come to expect from an image editor. Luckily, you don't need to be an expert to optimise your images, as the editing tools come with an automated fixing option that automatically corrects your shots. Of course, you can tinker with each option such as hue, saturation, and brightness for pinpoint accuracy.

Facial flair

We were also quite keen on the 'Facial flaws' tools, which allow you to remove red eye, wrinkles and blemishes from portrait photographs with a single click of the mouse. Likewise, you can instantly restore damaged photos with the software's automated scratch and dust removal options.

While PhotoSuite's image effects can't touch the likes of Photoshop or even Elements, they are very easy to access and provide a thumbnail preview of the potential differences to your picture. Admittedly this mollycoddling approach can become annoying if you're used to getting your hands dirty with a photo editor, as so much of it is laid out on a plate for you.

Nevertheless, PhotoSuite is brilliant for beginners, and delivers a range of fun, easy-to-use features on top of its photo-editing offering. This includes a series of template-based 'projects' which allow you to conjure up your own calendars, postcards, magazines and the like. On top of this, you get a photo-stitch function for dazzling your pals with panoramas and the ability to perform adjustments to multiple photos simultaneously, which can be a great timesaver for large picture collections. On the subject of bumper collections, the program's 'View & Organize' feature makes it a doddle to take care of all your snaps, where you preview thumbnails of your entire collection, arrange slide shows, or attach written notes to each of your shots. Naturally, as a Roxio product, the program also includes a copy of Easy CD & DVD Creator, allowing you to archive your snaps in just a few steps.

The wizard-style structure of PhotoSuite probably makes it the most simple-to-use image editor we've had the pleasure of meeting. If you want to fine-tune your pictures for the Web without messing about with a piece of software for ages then, at under £50, PhotoSuite is a wise choice. If, however, you enjoy creating stunning photo effects and having pinpoint control over your images, you're better off sticking with the likes of Elements and PSP. ■

The verdict

SOFTWARE: PhotoSuite 5 Platinum
PRICE: £49.99
TEL: N/A
URL: www.roxio.co.uk

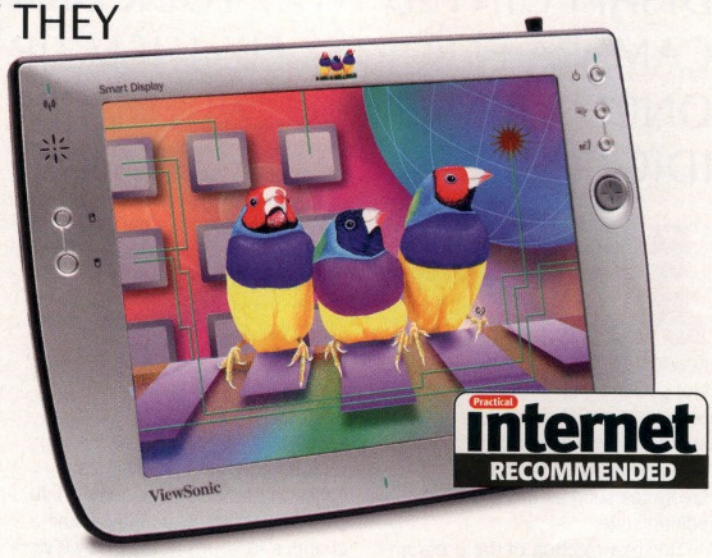
FEATURES: ★★★½☆
EASE OF USE: ★★★★½
VALUE: ★★★★½
OVERALL **81%**

✔ Incredibly simple and intuitive to use

✖ Lacks much in the way of high-end editing tools

ViewSonic V110 Smart Display

BEMUSED BY THE ADVANTAGES OF A WIRELESS MONITOR? READ ON TO SEE WHY THEY COULD BE THE NEXT BIG THING



The wireless saga has taken more twists and turns than a classic episode of *Dallas*, but it looks like the world is finally ready to ditch those leads and enter the world of cable-free computing once and for all. We've already seen the emergence of tablet PCs in recent months, complete with their portability and touch sensitive screens allowing you to write via the supplied stylus.

On first glance, the Smart Display from Viewsonic looks pretty much like your standard tablet PC. It has full wireless support, a touch sensitive screen, and sports a dashing look to boot. Take more than a cursory glance, however, and you'll notice that there's no keyboard here, or in fact any processing power whatsoever. As the name suggests, the Smart Display is a monitor, so needs a PC to connect up to in the first place.

You might wonder why anyone would want to connect to their PC via a wireless monitor – after all, most of us are entrenched in the ethos that you have to sit next to your PC at a desk. The simple fact is that, with a 100m range, you can install the Smart Display on your PC, then move about the house at your leisure. Unlike tablet PCs, you don't need to bother connecting up or making sure that your network is viable, as this comes as part of the Viewsonic setup.

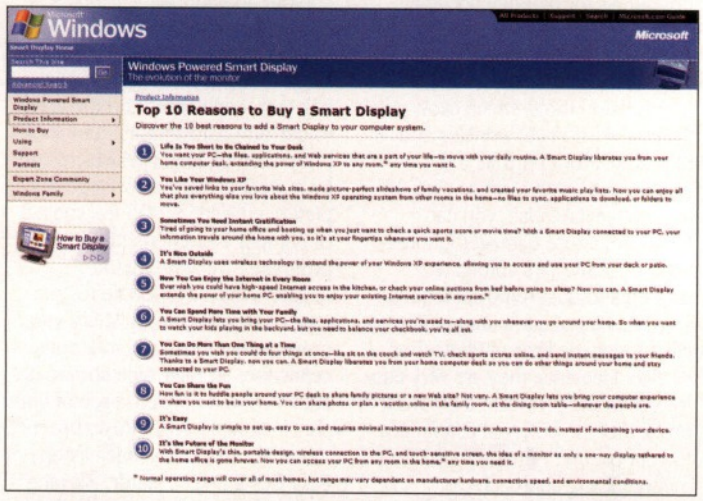
The setup procedure shouldn't tax you too much, although it does involve a bit of USB jiggery-pokery. Once you've finished, you can take the Smart Display out of its cradle and start moving with the freedom that only wireless can afford you. The benefit of the monitor-only status is that you can work with a standard PC for most of the time, then up sticks and start working on the same files in another room. In essence, you're using exactly the same machine as you were when sat at your desk, although the ViewSonic does take a bit of getting used to.

Smart cookie

The stylus-based input system of the Smart Display should help wean you off any mouse addiction, although you won't find the same array of tools that you would with a tablet PC. The 10-inch version we tried contained a version of Windows XP Professional, but not the special tablet edition of Windows. (If you're wondering, the Smart Display works only on XP Professional, hence the bundled upgrade for XP Home owners.)

Moving around on screen proves surprisingly easy, although we suspect you'll quickly tire of having to manually enter each and every single letter via the on-screen keyboard. After a few long URLs, we predict that you'll take the same route as us, and plug a keyboard into one of the many USB slots at the back and top of the unit.

The supplied wireless kit gives tremendous coverage over a range of 100m. This should suffice for all but the biggest of households, and should even allow the odd husband to retreat once more into his shed for Net access. ■



No Smart Display discussion would be complete without a look at what Microsoft says on the matter. Check it out at ***www.microsoft.com/windows/smartdisplay/default.asp***

The verdict

HARDWARE: ViewSonic V110 Smart Display
PRICE: £869
TEL: 01293 643900
URL: www.viewsoniceurope.com/uk

FEATURES: ★★★★★
EASE OF USE: ★★★★★
VALUE: ★★★½☆
OVERALL **87%**

✔ Lets you into the heady world of wireless networking without taking a degree in computing sciences

✖ It costs the same as a fairly good PC

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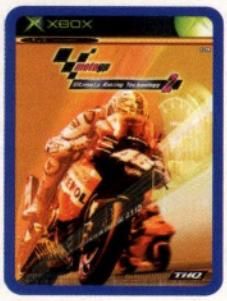

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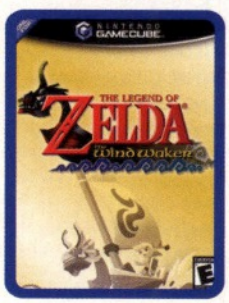

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Hi-Grade Notino W6700

BESIDES BOASTING OODLES OF STYLE, THIS WIDEBOY NOTEBOOK PACKS AN ALMIGHTY PUNCH

These days a TV isn't worth buying unless it's a widescreen, and it looks as though notebook PCs are going the same way. Following the success of Apple's perfectly-chiselled iBook, Hi-Grade has given its notebook range a stretch with the launch of this slinky widescreen number.

Set in a brushed aluminium casing, the W6700 looks very 21st Century and its futuristic curves are set off by its power LED and backlit keyboard which glow blue when you switch on the unit. While these style points serve to improve the aesthetics of the machine, undoubtedly the Notino's most attractive feature is its 15.2-inch TFT (1280x854) display. Unlike many of its LCD-based rivals, the display is crystal clear, produces an accurate reproduction and can be viewed easily from a range of angles.

What's inside?

As well as being a looker, the W6700 boasts a powerful engine room with the inclusion of a Mobile Intel Pentium 2GHz processor and 256Mb of RAM. As you might expect for such a price, the machine comes with a range of neat extras, including a DVD-ROM/CD-ReWriter Combo Drive, which is ideal for the 15:10 wide colour screen to view the latest movies. What's more, the front panel of the notebook includes a series of playback controls, making it easy to cue up and review DVDs without fussing with the on-board mouse, which is fairly primitive, and whose buttons have a tendency to stick.

Round the back, you're treated to all the input and output ports you'd expect, including two USB ports, a FireWire socket and Ethernet port. For a world of online thrills and spills from anywhere in the house, you also get a built-in mini PCI Wireless card. Throw in a GeForce4 440 graphics card and you've got a lightweight, sexy machine that's perfectly equipped for the modern surfer who's looking to embrace broadband, wireless networking and online gaming. ■

The verdict

HARDWARE: Hi-Grade Notino W6700
PRICE: £1,291.33
TEL: 020 8532 6111
URL: www.higrade.com

FEATURES: ★★★★½
EASE OF USE: ★★★★½
VALUE: ★★★★½
OVERALL **86%**

✔ Powerful, lightweight and drop-dead-gorgeous

✖ Mouse buttons are annoyingly stiff

AVG Anti-Virus

PREVENT A PLAGUE OF NASTY INTERNET BUGS FROM INFECTING YOUR MACHINE WITH THIS REVAMPED ANTI-VIRUS TOOLKIT FROM AVG

Since bursting onto the scene three years ago, AVG has grown in stature to become a serious threat to the big cheeses of the anti-virus world. Traditionally thought of as one of the best free virus-busting tools around, the developer is mounting a serious crack at the commercial market with this powered-up version of its flagship program.

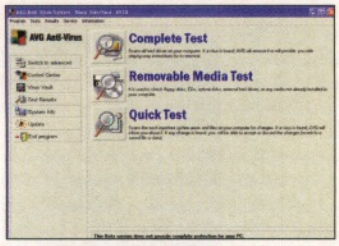
You'll notice that AVG's user interface has undergone something of an overhaul. The software comes with two levels of interface – basic and advanced – which is ideal for those who want one-click protection and those who like to analyse things a bit deeper. The basic interface should be adequate enough for most users' needs and can be configured to suit your requirements, such as shortcuts to the functions and scans that you use most.

Control freak

The epicentre of the software is the 'AVG Control Center' which displays all the various anti-virus components and their status. The interface is pretty intuitive, allowing you to reach all the most important functions from one screen. What's more, it provides immediate detection of when other system components are not working.

While these cosmetic changes are all well and good, the proof of the pudding is always in the scanning and detection. AVG 7.0 appears well-equipped in this department, thanks to the inclusion of a new scanning engine which can get down into all those hard-to-reach nooks and crannies. This includes a registry scan, Registry recover, email scan and heuristic analysis, which provides an extra layer of protection by finding new or as yet unknown viruses.

AVG 7.0 is a worthy update to the previous version and just about justifies its price tag. Tightwads, however, will be disappointed to learn that there are no plans to release a beefed-up version of AVG's freeware offering. ■



Keep your PC squeaky-clean with AVG

The verdict

SOFTWARE: AVG Anti-Virus System 7.0
PRICE: £30.55
TEL: 01636 701832
URL: www.avguk.com

FEATURES: ★★★★½
EASE OF USE: ★★★★½
VALUE: ★★★½☆
OVERALL **82%**

✔ Easy-to-use with an effective new scanning engine

✖ Doesn't scan as quickly as some other anti-virus tools

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CD contents

Welcome...

CONTRARY TO WHAT many people might tell you, building cracking Web sites doesn't have to involve hours of frenzied number-crunching. Programs such as NetObjects Fusion have helped to dispell the myth that you need an encyclopaedic knowledge of HTML to produce a decent site. Thankfully, you don't just have to take our word for it as we've included a fully working version of the excellent template-based Web editor on this month's packed disc.

Following last month's Paint Shop Pro 5 giveaway, we're encouraging you to go further with Paint Shop Pro Xtras. This powerful set of plug-ins for the popular image editor allows you to apply some truly dazzling effects to your Web graphics.

Lee Cornish, Multimedia Editor
lee@paragon.co.uk

How to use the disc

The minimum recommended specification to run the *Practical Internet* CD is 800 X 600 screen resolution, 32Mb RAM, 16-bit colour, Windows 95/98/Me, Intel Pentium or compatible P166. We recommend that all users shut down all other applications while running the CD.

The CD will autorun in Windows 95/98. For users without autorun enabled go to the start menu, select RUN and then type d:\PracticalInternet.exe (replacing 'd' with the letter of your CD drive) and press 'Return'.

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We will be pleased to replace any CD that is cracked, scratched or snapped upon purchase. Return them to the following address: Cover Disc Returns, Paragon Publishing, Paragon House, St Peter's Road, Bournemouth, BH1 2JS. If you experience technical problems, not due to physical damage on the CD, please DO NOT return any discs to us unless requested by the support team.

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Problems using the disc
If you encounter problems using the CD or installing the software you can email **cdhelp@paragon.co.uk**. Questions will be answered twice daily. Please provide us with as much information about the technical specifications of your machine and the software errors you are receiving as well as quoting the magazine and issue number in your email. Our helpdesk team will be taking calls about disc installation problems on Wednesday afternoons between 2 and 6pm. Phone **01202 200259**.

NOTE: This service can only deal with problems when installing software from our CDs. Issues surrounding the use and purchase of software and all ISP queries must be referred to the relevant software publisher, merchant or ISP. Please note that we do not support Windows 3.1/ Windows 95/ Windows NT or Windows 2000 Operating Systems.

The CD logo

Look out for this logo in the magazine. It tells you which of the programs mentioned in features, or explored in tutorials, are on the *Practical Internet* cover CD-ROM.

On the CD this month...

Issue 80

1. Full Programs
2. Browsing Essentials
3. Online Chat
4. Outlook Plug-ins
5. Sitebuilding Essentials
6. Workshops

Practical internet | CREDITS | QUIT

1 FULL PROGRAMS

- NetObjects Fusion 4
- Paint Shop Pro Xtras
- Web Link Validator 2.1

Our three full versions have something for everyone this month.

2 BROWSING ESSENTIALS

- Acrobat Reader 5.1
- Download Accelerator Plus
- Eudora 5.1
- ICQ 2003a
- Internet Explorer 6
- KaZaA Media Desktop 2
- Mozilla 1.2.1
- Netscape 7.02
- Opera 7.01
- Shockwave Player 8
- Web Demevolist 2.0
- Winamp 3.0
- ZoneAlarm

Despite the thousands of programs currently available on the Net, we've found that everyone tends to use the same key utilities to fulfil their browsing requirements. This is why we came up with the Browsing Essentials section. It's filled to the brim with the programs you can't afford to live without before connecting to the Net. Access Web sites, download files more quickly, and embrace multimedia with our collection of tools you can't ignore.

3 ONLINE CHAT

- AIM
- Bersirc 1.4
- Chat Watch 2.3
- Chat-N-Tickle 5.1
- Chatterbox 2.01
- Cheetah Chat 6.4.9
- ICQ 2003
- ICQ Message Archive
- IRCXpro Messenger
- Join Me 1.2
- mIRC 6.03
- Mylabber Instant Messenger 3.0.02
- Odigo 3.6
- Rose 3D Chat 1.9
- SeeStorm Messenger 1.1
- Talking Messenger 3.0
- Trillian 0.74
- Visual Chat 1.77
- Voice Changer Software 3.0
- Yahoo! Messenger

Hungry to flex your vocal muscles after reading our feature on page 36-40? Check out this range of top chatting tools for you to get stuck into...

4 OUTLOOK EXPRESS PLUG-INS

- ActiveTracker 2.0
- Annotis Mail 1.1
- bxAutoZip
- Confirmax 5.0
- Express Archiver 2.1
- Hotbar 4.0
- Inbox Protector OE
- OutTray 2.01
- Quotes 2002
- TalkSender 2.7

Give your copy of Outlook Express a shove in the right direction with these ten essential plug-ins. These top tools will help you kill spam, create new stationery and much more.

6 WORKSHOPS

- DivX Pro Player
- Flash MX
- Flash MX project files
- JetAudio Basic 5.01
- NetObjects Fusion
- 4 project files
- Opus Pro
- Opus Pro project files
- PHP project files
- ShopFactory 5.80
- Washee 1.2

Follow this month's workshops with these files, which include key project files for you to install yourself.

5 SITE-BUILDING ESSENTIALS

- ACDSee Classic 2.43
- Arachnophilia 4.0
- CoffeeCup Firestarter 5.0
- CoffeeCup Free HTML 6.0
- DHTML Menu Builder 4.0
- Dreamweaver MX
- HTML Kit 1.0
- Irfanview 3.8
- Paint Shop Pro 7.04
- Web Counter 5.0
- Web Dwarf 2.0
- WS_FTP LE 5.08
- Xara Webstyle 3.1

What do you mean, you don't have the right tools to create a good Web site? Maybe you've been struggling with poor software until now, but there's no excuse to carry on that way. Our premium selection of Site-building Essentials ensures that you've got the programs you need to fashion the kind of Web sites that you could only dream of before. From simple WYSIWYG page designers through to even more simple HTML editors, it's all here – and that doesn't even take into account the image editors and menu creators that we've thrown in. Basically, don't even think about setting up a new Web site without taking a good hard look at the programs in this list. Go on, you know you want to.

Try these

Paint Shop Pro 7.04, trial
Widely observed as one of the greatest image editors on the shelf, Paint Shop Pro allows you to conjure stunning Web artwork as well as removing scratches and blemishes from your photographs.

Xara Webstyle 3.1, trial
Creating stylish Web graphics is a subject that puts the willies up many people. However, thanks to this impressive utility, you can easily fashion professional banner ads, button bars and dynamic menus.

Winamp 3.0, Freeware
Just when you thought digital music couldn't get any more enjoyable, along comes the latest version of Winamp to help you crank up your MP3 experiences. An intuitive playlist editor, 10-band graphic equalizer, and infinite skinning opportunities, Winamp will soon bring beautiful music to your ears.

Paint Shop Pro Xtras

ADD SPARKLING NEW FEATURES TO YOUR IMAGE EDITOR WITH THIS COLLECTION OF FANTASTIC ADD-ONS

FULLY WORKING PROGRAM! AS SOLD FOR £10

PAINT SHOP PRO has long been regarded as one of the best image editors on the go. Which is why you may be shocked to hear that it's possible to make it even better.

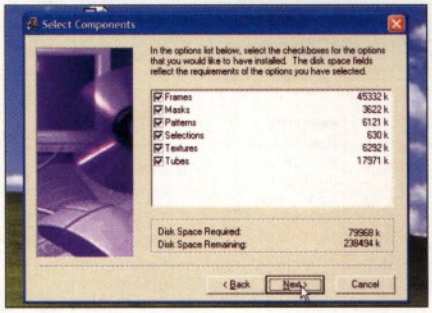
Photological Xtras is a bumper collection of over 600 Patterns, Textures, Frames, Cut-Outs, and Picture Tubes designed to add even more functionality to Digital Workshop's already well-stacked graphics program. By installing Xtras, these new graphical elements are automatically added to your Paint Shop Pro folder, allowing you to apply them to your images at the drop of a hat.

Using these new elements can help you breathe new life into your Web pages. The stylish new patterns and textures within Xtras make ideal Web backgrounds, helping your site stand out from the pack of bland, unimaginative pages online. You could even use these to help you create original email stationery in order to cheer up your pals with a colourful message.

Another of Paint Shop Pro's innovative features is its 'Picture Tube' facility, which allows you to create lively artwork using a series of similar objects that are manipulated into a brush effect. This can be done simply by clicking and dragging the mouse pointer across the page to create a collage with a wide range of images such as pool balls, playing cards, flags and stars.

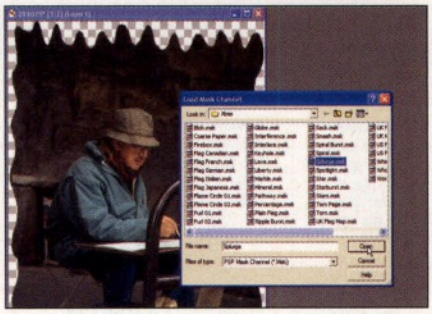
If you really want to make an image stand out then why not apply a frame to it? Xtras contains a bumper selection of stylish frames which, like the rest of the elements, can create stunning effects on your images while requiring the greatest of ease.

What you can achieve with Xtras


Select Components
In the options list below, select the checkboxes for the options that you would like to have installed. The disk space fields reflect the requirements of the options you have selected.
Frames 45332 k
Masks 3622 k
Patterns 6121 k
Selections 630 k
Textures 6292 k
Tubes 17971 k
Disk Space Required: 79968 k
Disk Space Remaining: 238494 k
< Back
Next >
Cancel

1 Setting up

Launch the Xtras installer from this month's cover disc. As part of the setup, you will be asked which components you'd like to install.

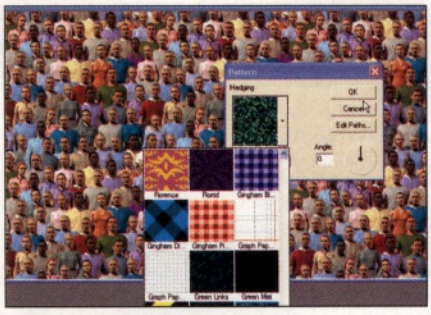


2 Applying a mask

Adding a Mask allows you to blank out certain parts of a picture. Choose 'Load from Disk' from the 'Masks' menu and browse to the 'Xtras' within the Paint Shop Pro 'Masks' folder.

3 Framing an image

Xtras provides you with a host of quality frames. Simply select 'Picture Frame' from the 'Image' menu then pick a frame from the menu.

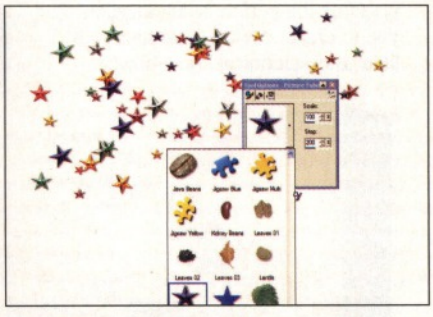


4 New patterns

Xtras comes with a range of brand new patterns. Select a background by clicking on the 'Styles' panel within the colour palette and choosing one from the 'Patterns' button.

5 Using selections

To apply one of the preset selections from Xtras, choose 'Selection' and click 'Load Selection Area'. Each of these gives you a shape that you can cut out of an image.



6 Working with Tubes

Click on the 'Picture Tube' tool and drag the mouse across the page to apply the tube. Select the picture you wish to use from the 'Tool Options' palette.

CD contents

CD highlights

NetObjects Fusion 4

FULLY WORKING PROGRAM! AS SOLD FOR £199

GIVE YOURSELF AND YOUR BUSINESS A STRONG ONLINE PRESENCE WITH THIS POWERFUL WEB EDITOR

CREATING A COMPLETE Web site from scratch can be pretty daunting to say the least. However, armed with the right software you can put pages together as easily as falling off a log.

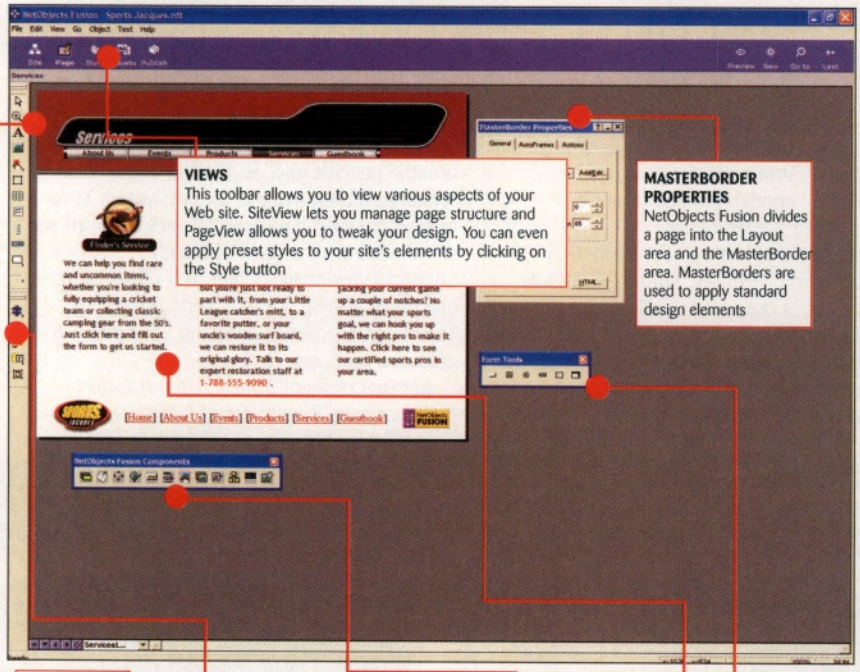
NetObjects Fusion has long been one of the world's favourite Web editors and has been used to create countless successful online businesses. The software allows you to create, manage and update effective sites easily. Its WYSIWYG interface allows you to build and update your site with drag-and-drop simplicity, placing page elements exactly where you want them to go without writing a single line of code.

As well as allowing you to create dazzling pages using the program's Layout Editor to place graphics, text and multimedia, Fusion is also ideal for anyone looking to turn their eBusiness pipedream into a money-making reality. The software contains everything you need to transform your site into a money-spinner including a component for iCat Commerce Online which adds turnkey catalogue and shopping-cart functionality to your site.

Fusion allows you to create visually impressive pages in a jiffy thanks to its collection of over 50 SiteStyles, which let you pick from a range of preset site templates and effects, including rollover effects. You can also create your own banner adverts and other graphics using the Fusion's Ad Banner component.

If you've always talked about putting a site together or creating your own online store but never got round to it, this free version of NetObjects Fusion presents the perfect solution, allowing you to create professional sites with little or no technical know-how.

GET TO KNOW NETOBJECTS FUSION 4


VIEWS
This toolbar allows you to view various aspects of your Web site. SiteView lets you manage page structure and PageView allows you to tweak your design. You can even apply preset styles to your site's elements by clicking on the Style button
MASTERBORDER PROPERTIES
NetObjects Fusion divides a page into the Layout area and the MasterBorder area. MasterBorders are used to apply standard design elements
STANDARD TOOLBAR
These tools allow you to manage the main elements of the site including zooming in; adding text and pictures; and creating hotspots, tables, banners and navigation bars
ADVANCED TOOLBAR
Here you'll find tools for handling media plug-ins, Java and ActiveX. This toolbar also contains features for creating Data lists and handling external HTML
COMPONENT TOOLS
The software comes with a range of components which allow you to brighten up your Web site, add functionality and generally make it look more professional
PAGEVIEW
Here is where the meat of the design work is done. PageView allows you to add text, graphics and other objects to develop page design and add content
FORM TOOLS
You can add any standard form objects to a form including single and multiple-line text fields, check boxes, radio buttons, scrolling lists or drop-down lists

Grab a copy of NetObjects Fusion 7

TAKE UP OUR AMAZING SPECIAL OFFER AND GET HOLD OF THE LATEST VERSION OF THIS MASTERFUL WEB EDITOR AT A KNOCK-DOWN RATE

IT MIGHT SEEM hard to believe after tasting NetObjects Fusion 4, but the program has got even better.

The latest version of the site creation software comes with the same drag-and-drop simplicity as Fusion 4, but boasts a range of unique new features. This includes a 'Quick Tools' facility for tracking hits on your site; improved online view providing full-time access to the NetObjects support community; plus templates that can be saved in Zip format for easy collaboration. NetObjects Fusion 7 also includes support for Flash MX and Windows Media Player, plus enhanced link tools that let you easily add and manage pop-up windows and targeted links.

We're offering *Practical Internet* readers the chance to upgrade to this latest version for only £75, saving almost £65 on the normal price (£139.99). To take up the offer simply visit **www.redleaf.co.uk/fusion4** and register version 4 for free. You'll then be directed to a page where you can upgrade to the latest release for the special price.

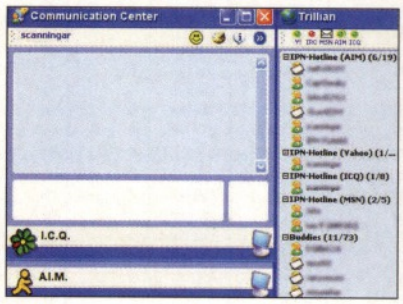
Chat companions

TALK UNTIL YOU'RE BLUE IN THE FACE WITH THE HELP OF OUR COLLECTION OF ONLINE CHAT UTILTIES

TRILLIAN 0.74

Freeware, 2.25Mb

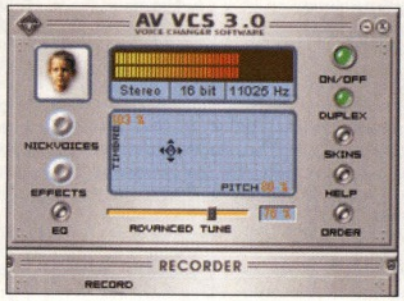
Take four instant messaging clients into the shower? Not us, we use Trillian to communicate with all our Net buddies on ICQ, AIM, MSN, and Yahoo! Messengers. The program acts as a single hub for all your chat activity, allowing you to import your buddy lists, passwords and client preferences in next to no time. Trillian boasts a range of features to help you communicate much more intelligently, including the ability to check supported email accounts with a single click, a skinnable interface and also the chance to view detailed logs for each client.



VOICE CHANGER SOFTWARE 3.0

Shareware, 1.55Mb

Ever get the urge to make yourself sound like a Dalek, *Metal Mickey*, or even John Major? This amazing piece of software allows you to live out your vocal fantasies on the Net, changing your voice to confuse, amuse or just plain annoy fellow online chatters. By adjusting the Pitch & Timbre table or choosing from the available 'nick voices' you can alter the sound output when chatting in voice chat rooms using instant messengers like Yahoo!, AOL and ICQ. The program includes a range of effects for making the output more reliable in each context.



Web Link Validator 2.1

FULLY WORKING PROGRAM! AS SOLD FOR £17

KEEP YOUR WEB PAGES SPICK AND SPAN WITH THIS LINK CHECKER

HOW MANY TIMES have you wanted to garrotte a Web designer after being led down the garden path by a site full of broken links? The importance of ensuring that every link on a site actually leads somewhere can't be overstated, and can mean the difference between a popular site and one which visitors flee from en masse.

Thankfully, with a bit of help from Web Link Validator, you can make sure that your site's visitors don't give you the old heave ho by smartening up your pages. The site management and link checking tool automates the process of site testing, performing a thorough analysis of your site. As well as sniffing out dead links, the program also pinpoints orphaned files, slow-loading, deep, outdated and small-sized pages.

Web Link Validator can access HTTPS resources and password-protected pages, and works via a proxy server. Reports about the checked pages are presented in a clear, easy-to-read manner, and can be saved in HTML, TXT, RTF, CSV or Excel formats.

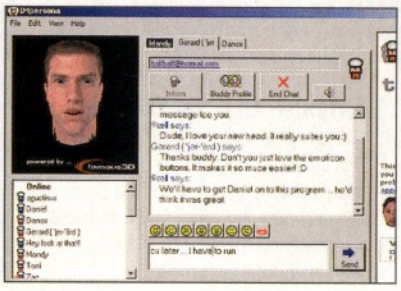
Other useful features of the software include the ability to check the local copy of your Web site and plain text URL lists, individual settings for each site, and a customisable interface.

In order to install this fantastic program from the cover disc, simply follow the link in the CD-ROM interface. You'll then be presented with a pop-up screen which tells you where you can find the registration key. Double-click on this, and you're away.

IMPERSONA 1.3

Freeware, 257Kb

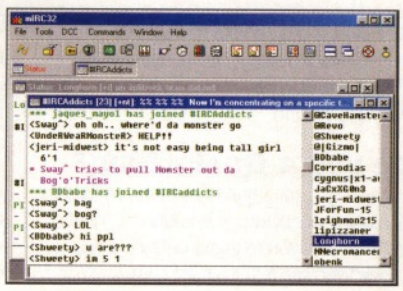
Although online chat has its benefits as an anonymous medium, there's no substitute for visual face-to-face communication. Actually there is. This neat little program allows you to see and hear your chums as you chat on the Net in the form of animated characters that read your incoming messages. Simply select a 'persona' from the program's extensive library of characters, set it as your profile and start chatting away. As a result, whenever you receive a message you can instantly see who it's from simply by looking at their persona, and vice versa.



mIRC 6.03

Shareware, 1.15Mb

If you're keen to sample the delights of Internet Relay Chat, then you could do a lot worse than installing this popular client. The software is fully configurable and comes with an intuitive interface, an events handler, and full send-and-receive capabilities for direct client connection files. At any given time, IRC networks can have as many as 40,000 users, so finding someone to talk to or share files with is rarely a problem. Best of all, mIRC allows you to create your own features, letting you use the program's scripting features to make the desired changes.



Freeware of the month

EACH MONTH, WE TRAWL THE WILDS OF THE NET FOR THE LATEST AND GREATEST FREEWARE, SO YOU DON'T HAVE TO

WEB DWARF 2.0

www.virtualmechanics.com

DISAPPOINTINGLY, WEB DWARF has nothing to do with pint-sized heroes Gary Coleman, Ronnie Corbett or the bloke off *Willow*. However, it makes up for this by being one of the best free Web editors we've come across. The easy-to-use drag-and-drop interface allows you to quickly knock together complete sites without the need for a separate image editor. Web Dwarf boasts built-in graphics creation functionality, allowing you to draw right in the work window. The program's layout functions include a snap-to grid and snap-to tabs, though you can place your pictures and text anywhere you like on the page simply by dragging, dropping and positioning. It also comes with its own word-processor style text editor which lets you choose your font style and size, type in your text, create links and perform spell checks. What's more, you can preview and publish your pages to HTML or SVG within one click, via the built-in FTP feature.

Buyers' guide

A comprehensive resource covering Internet service providers and the very best Net software and hardware. Compare them all at a glance...

Using this guide

BUYING NEW HARDWARE and software for your PC or Mac can be a tricky task. You often have to choose between products which cost the same price and seem to offer identical features. What's more, high street shops encourage you to spend a little more on buying higher spec products than you really need.

This is why *Practical Internet*'s Buyers' Guide is so useful. It's been written with everyday Net users like you in mind and only includes the products and services which we think are genuinely worth buying.

Buy with confidence

The information here is updated every month, but please note that prices and features do sometimes change before we can amend them on these pages – so it's best to check with the supplier before buying.

Look out for our cherished Star Buy logo (below) which is only awarded to the best quality products around.

Practical internet ★★ STAR BUY ★★

Which ISP?

With thousands of ISPs all offering great-looking deals, it's tough to find the right service. This guide helps decide which is best for you

BROADBAND: ADSL

ISP	URL	MONTHLY COST	SETUP COST	EMAILS	WEB SPACE (Mb)	NEWSGROUPS
0800 Dial ADSL	www.0800dial.com	£28.99	£65.00	15	10	Yes
ABC Net ADSL Home 500 Self Install	www.abcnet.co.uk/	£34.99	£35.00	0	0	NK
ABC Net ADSL Home 500 Self Install 20:1	www.abcnet.co.uk/	£59.99	£35.00	0	0	NK
ABC Net ADSL Home Single User 500 USB	www.abcnet.co.uk/	£34.99	£250.00	0	0	NK
ABC Net ADSL Office 1000 Self Install	www.abcnet.co.uk/	£94.99	£35.00	0	0	NK
ABC Net ADSL Office Multi User 1000	www.abcnet.co.uk/	£99.99	£250.00	0	0	NK
ABC Net ADSL Office Multi User 500	www.abcnet.co.uk/	£69.99	£250.00	0	0	NK
Abel Always Routed1000	www.abelalways.co.uk	£109.00	£130.00	Unlimited	50	Yes
Abel Always Routed2000	www.abelalways.co.uk	£135.00	£130.00	Unlimited	50	Yes
Abel Always Routed500	www.abelalways.co.uk	£75.00	£130.00	Unlimited	50	Yes
Abel Always USB	www.abelalways.co.uk	£25.50	£210.00	Unlimited	50	Yes
ADSL NOW! 1000 (Self-Install)	www.adsl-now.co.uk	£139.77	N/A	0	0	No
ADSL NOW! 500 (Self-Install)	www.adsl-now.co.uk	£92.77	N/A	0	0	No
ADSL4Home! (Self-Install)	www.adsl-now.co.uk	£29.32	£58.69	0	0	No
Albion.net ADSL 1000 LAN	www.albion.co.uk	£109.00	N/A	Unlimited	10	Yes
Albion.net ADSL 2000 LAN	www.albion.co.uk	£139.00	N/A	Unlimited	10	Yes
Albion.net ADSL 500 LAN	www.albion.co.uk	£79.00	N/A	Unlimited	10	Yes
Albion.net ADSL 500 Single	www.albion.co.uk	£39.00	N/A	Unlimited	10	Yes
Allcomm Home 500	www.allcomm.co.uk	£25.00	£150.00	0	0	No
Allcomm S1000	www.allcomm.co.uk	£120.00	£286.00	0	0	No
Allcomm S2000	www.allcomm.co.uk	£150.00	£286.00	0	0	No
Allcomm S500	www.allcomm.co.uk	£85.00	£286.00	0	0	No
Andrews & Arnold Home 500	www.aa.nu	£58.75	£99.88	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes
Andrews & Arnold Home 500 Lite (Self-Install)	www.aa.nu	£29.95	£99.88	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes
Andrews & Arnold Office 500 (Self-Install)	www.aa.nu	£75.00	£99.88	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes
AOL Broadband (Self Install)	www.aol.co.uk	£27.99	£85.00	7	14	Yes
applica Connect1000	www.applicabroadband.co.uk	£99.00	£25.00	50	0	NK
applica Connect500	www.applicabroadband.co.uk	£65.00	£25.00	50	0	NK
applica ConnectSolo	www.applicabroadband.co.uk	£26.99	£25.00	50	0	NK
Aviators ADSL Home 500	www.aviators.net	£29.00	£199.00	0	0	NK
BISCIT EUSB 500 (Engineer Installed)	www.biscit.com	£23.95	£210.00	0	20	NK

Quick steps to picking your ideal Internet service provider

1 What kind of broadband?

ADSL is currently the fastest-growing connection type in the UK. It relies on you shelling out for BT to 'activate' your line, then paying a monthly subscription. Expect download speeds of up to 60Kb a second with an ADSL line.

CABLE services have been around for longer, and utilise the same kind of technology that powers cable TV into many people's homes. If you live in a cable-enabled area, then you can get anything up to 120Kb a second.

SATELLITE presents the only viable broadband option for people who can't get either ADSL or cable. Costs are high, though, and setting up tends to be very complicated.

2 Can you get it?

Many people can't get ADSL or cable access because it is unavailable in their area. If this is you, take a look at our rundown of unmetered and pay-as-you-go services.

3 Getting speedy help

Worried you'll need your ISP's technical help a lot? Use our guide to find yourself an inexpensive support line.

4 Are you a Quake king?

Net gaming is coming back into the limelight with the increasing popularity of broadband. Most broadband ISPs allow you to game on their time, but check their Web site first to make sure.

5 Building a Web site?

The days when you got a free domain name with every account you set up are long gone, but you can still get your hands on masses of Web space for nothing. Check that your potential provider is generous with free Web space – although 10Mb will be more than enough for most people.

6 Check the mail

Virtually every ISP will offer you at least one POP3 email account when you sign up, but it's worth checking out the small print, especially with new 'no-frills' ADSL services which are designed to give you a basic connection and not much more.

IN ASSOCIATION WITH www.net4nowt.com Net4Nowt

ISP	URL	MONTHLY COST	SETUP COST	EMAILS	WEB SPACE (Mb)	NEWSGROUPS
BISCIT Home USB 500 (Self-Install)	www.biscit.com	£23.40	£15.00	0	20	NK
BISCIT OFFICE S1000 (Self-Install)	www.biscit.com	£99.95	£28.00	0	50	NK
BISCIT USB S500 (Self-Install)	www.biscit.com	£74.95	£25.00	0	50	Yes
Boltblue Broadband (Self-Install)	www.boltblue.com	£27.99	N/A	5	15	Yes
Breathepro ADSL Connect (Self Install)	www.breathe.com	£25.99	£65.00	25	25	Yes
BT Broadband	www.btclickforbusiness.com	£27.00	£30.00	0	0	No
BTopenworld Business 500 Plug & Go (Self-Install)	www.btclickforbusiness.com	£29.99	N/A	10	20	Yes
BTopenworld business1000PLUS	www.btclickforbusiness.com	£119.99	N/A	10	20	Yes
BTopenworld business500	www.btclickforbusiness.com	£29.99	£210.00	10	20	Yes
BTopenworld business500PLUS	www.btclickforbusiness.com	£79.99	N/A	10	20	Yes
BTopenworld Home Plug & Go - Line Only (Self-install)	www.btclickforbusiness.com	£29.99	N/A	10	50	Yes
BTopenworld home500	www.btopenworld.com/	£29.99	£250.00	10	50	Yes
BTopenworld Home 500 Plug & Go (Self-Install)	www.btopenworld.com/	£29.99	N/A	10	50	Yes
Business Serve 1000 Wires Only	www.businessserve.co.uk	£87.95	£60.00	0	0	No
Business Serve 2000 Wires Only	www.businessserve.co.uk	£107.95	£60.00	0	0	No
Business Serve 500 Wires Only	www.businessserve.co.uk	£67.95	£60.00	0	0	No
Business Serve SOHO Wires Only	www.businessserve.co.uk	£29.32	£60.00	0	0	No
CharityDAYS Donate ADSL Home	www.charitydays.net	£30.99	£41.13	Unlimited	250	Yes
Eclipse ADSL Connect 500lite (Self-Install)	www.eclipse.net.uk	£22.75	£25.00	Unlimited	20	Yes
edNET Multi User 500	www.ednet.co.uk	£99.95	£25.00	Unlimited	50	Yes
edNET Multi User 2000	www.ednet.co.uk	£129.95	£25.00	Unlimited	50	Yes
edNET Multi User 1000	www.ednet.co.uk	£199.95	£25.00	Unlimited	50	Yes
edNET Single User 500	www.ednet.co.uk	£29.95	£25.00	Unlimited	50	Yes
fairADSL (Self-Install)	www.fairadsl.co.uk	£18.99	£33.00	1	0	Yes
Firenet Speedwire 500	www.firenet.uk.net	£26.50	£75.00	Unlimited	10	Yes
Firstnet Single User	www.firstnet.net.uk	£75.00	£65.00	Unlimited	20	Yes
Force9 ADSL 500	www.force9.co.uk	£64.63	£305.50	Unlimited	500	Yes
Force9 ADSL Home	www.force9.co.uk	£22.99	£246.75	Unlimited	250	Yes
Force9 ADSL Home - Self Install	www.force9.co.uk	£22.99	£41.13	Unlimited	250	Yes
Force9 ADSL Netstart	www.force9.co.uk	£47.00	£176.25	Unlimited	250	Yes
Force9 ADSL Netstart - Self Install	www.force9.co.uk	£35.24	£58.75	Unlimited	250	Yes
Force9 ADSL Office 500 - Self Install	www.force9.co.uk	£64.63	£58.75	Unlimited	250	Yes
Free-Online ADSL 500	www.free-online.co.uk	£64.63	£305.50	Unlimited	500	Yes
Free-Online ADSL Netstart	www.free-online.co.uk	£47.00	£176.25	Unlimited	500	Yes
Free-Online ADSL Netstart - Self Install	www.free-online.co.uk	£35.24	£58.75	Unlimited	250	Yes
Free-Online ADSL Office 500 - Self Install	www.free-online.co.uk	£64.63	£58.75	Unlimited	250	Yes
Freedom2Surf Pure IP 1000 (Self-Install)	www.freedom2surf.net	£95.00	£29.99	20	20	Yes
Freedom2Surf Pure IP 500 (Self-Install)	www.freedom2surf.net	£60.00	£29.99	20	20	Yes
Freeserve Broadband (Self-Install)	www.freeserve.com	£27.99	£84.99	Unlimited	150	Yes
Gconnect Business 1000 (Self-Install)	www.adsl-business.co.uk	£110.00	£30.00	1	20	NK
Gconnect Business 2000 (Self-Install)	www.adsl-business.co.uk	£140.00	£30.00	1	20	NK
Gconnect Business 500 Single User (Self-Install)	www.adsl-business.co.uk	£29.99	£30	1	20	NK
Gconnect Micro Business 500 (Self-Install)	www.adsl-business.co.uk	£50.00	£30	1	20	NK
Go-Plus Fast (Self-Install)	www.go-plus.net	£25.00	£60.00	Unlimited	10	Yes
Inweb Home 500 (Self-Install)	www.inweb.net.uk	£28.99	£76.38	Unlimited	10	Yes
Jings 500U PLUS	www.jings.com	£59.99	£180.00	Unlimited	25	Yes
Jolt Home500 Lite (Self Install)	www.jolt.co.uk	£22.99	£58.75	Unlimited	Unlimited	No
Jolt Office500 (Self Install)	www.jolt.co.uk	£29.99	£58.75	Unlimited	Unlimited	No
Kingston Karoo RapidTime Pro	www.kingstonbiz.net	£38.99	£150.00	Unlimited	20	Yes
MacAce AlwaysOn@Home ADSL500 (Self-Install)	www.macace.net	£29.99	£58.75	5	0	No
Madasafish Dazzle 500U 24	www.madasafish.com	£55.95	N/A	Unlimited	25	Yes
Madasafish Dazzle 500U PLUS	www.madasafish.com	£59.99	£180.00	Unlimited	25	Yes
Mailbox Business Connect 500	www.mailbox.net.uk	£75.00	£135.00	10	25	Yes
Mailbox BusinessWire 500 (Self-Install)	www.mailbox.net.uk	£75.00	£30.00	10	25	Yes
Mailbox Standard Connect 500	www.mailbox.net.uk	£34.08	£30.00	10	25	Yes
MetroNet 500	www.metronet.co.uk	£35.99	£176.25	5	20	Yes
MetroNet S500	www.metronet.co.uk	£186.83	£305.50	50	20	Yes
MetroNet S1000	www.metronet.co.uk	£186.83	£305.50	50	20	Yes
Netscalibur SoHo 500 (Self Install)	www.netscalibur.co.uk	£34.08	£64.63	Unlimited	20	Yes
Netscalibur Business 1000 (Self-Install)	www.netscalibur.co.uk	£158.63	£323.13	Unlimited	20	Yes
Netscalibur Business 500 (Self-Install)	www.netscalibur.co.uk	£116.33	£323.13	Unlimited	20	Yes
NewNet Business 1000 (Self Install)	www.newnet.co.uk	£92.00	£25.00	Unlimited	125	Yes
NewNet Business 500 (Self Install)	www.newnet.co.uk	£61.00	£25.00	Unlimited	125	Yes
NewNet Business 500 PLUS	www.newnet.co.uk	£88.13	£305.50	Unlimited	100	Yes
NewNet Home 500 M (Self Install)	www.newnet.co.uk	£32.00	£25.00	Unlimited	25	Yes
NewNet Home 500 N (Self Install)	www.newnet.co.uk	£24.00	£25.00	5	0	Yes
NewNet Home 500 S (Self Install)	www.newnet.co.uk	£27.00	£25.00	Unlimited	25	Yes
OneTel Unplugged 500 Plug & Play (Self-Install)	www.onetel.co.uk	£27.99	£60.00	1	0	No
Onyx Business Broadband Silver (Self-Install)	www.onyx-adsl.net	£82.25	N/A	Unlimited	25	Yes
Onyx Home Office Broadband (Self-Install)	www.onyx-adsl.net	£29.99	N/A	Unlimited	0	Yes
Pipemedia USB 512K	www.adsl.uk.net	£57.58	£235.00	Unlimited	50	Yes
PIPEX Business 500	www.pipex.com	£82.19	£323.13	12	50	Yes
PIPEX Xtreme Business 500 (Self-Install)	www.pipex.com	£76.32	£70.50	12	50	Yes
PIPEX Xtreme Home Office (Self-Install)	www.pipex.com	£29.32	£70.50	12	50	Yes
PIPEX Xtreme Solo (Self-Install)	www.pipex.com	£23.44	£58.75	12	50	Yes
PlusNet ADSL 500	www.plus.net	£88.13	£152.75	Unlimited	500	Yes
PlusNet ADSL Home	www.plus.net	£22.99	£246.75	Unlimited	250	Yes
PlusNet ADSL 1000	www.plus.net	£129.25	£152.75	Unlimited	500	Yes
PlusNet ADSL Netstart	www.plus.net	£246.75	£35.24	Unlimited	250	Yes
PlusNet ADSL Home Surf - Self Install	www.plus.net	£19.99	N/A	Unlimited	25	Yes
PlusNet ADSL Netstart - Self Install	www.plus.net	£35.24	£29.38	Unlimited	250	Yes

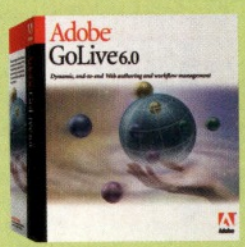
TOP BUYS

Web site builders

Dreamweaver MX

£352.31
www.macromedia.com
What's good? Reaches new levels of usability, all you need to create dynamic Web sites
What's bad? It's still very very expensive
Telephone: 0800 8358 5857
Verdict: 92%

Adobe GoLive 6



£229
www.adobe.com
What's good? Delivers superb results and allows you to create content for numerous different platforms
What's bad? It isn't cheap, some areas of the program still more baffling than Dreamweaver
Telephone: 020 8606 4001
Verdict: 82%

HoTMetaL Pro 6

£79
www.hotmetalpro.com
What's good? Inexpensive program with expensive-looking features
What's bad? The integration of HTML coding might bamboozle beginners
Telephone: 020 8387 4110
Verdict: 73%

Flash MX

£369
www.macromedia.com
What's good? The totally revamped interface is superior to its predecessors, plenty of new tools
What's bad? Still a bit expensive
Telephone: 0800 8358 5857
Verdict: 94%

Buyers' guide

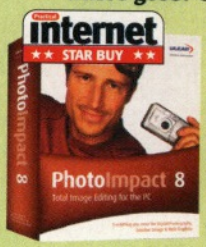
Which ISP?

TOP BUYS

Web image editors

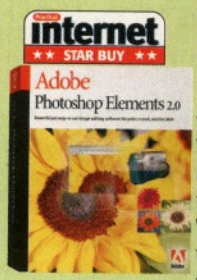
PhotoImpact 8

£89
www.ulead.co.uk
What's good? Comprehensive imaging package that takes the needs of Web users into account
What's bad? Could be considered pricey
Telephone: 01327 844755
Verdict: 91%



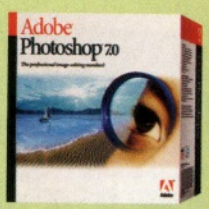
Adobe Photoshop Elements 2.0

£88
www.adobe.com
What's good? Unrivalled range of incredible features. Great value
What's bad? There aren't that many major changes since version one
Telephone: 020 8606 4000
Verdict: 92%



Adobe Photoshop 7.0

£586.33
www.adobe.com
What's good? A truly amazing set of tools for graphic professionals
What's bad? Expensive and still a little complicated in some areas
Telephone: 020 8606 4001
Verdict: 89%



JASC Paint Shop Pro 7 AE

£79+VAT
www.digitalworkshop.co.uk
What's good? Cheap, intuitive and easy to use. A dream for those new to the world of graphics
What's bad? Doesn't offer the same depth of features as Adobe's Photoshop
Telephone: 01295 258335
Verdict: 90%

ISP	URL	MONTHLY COST	SETUP COST	EMAILS	WEB SPACE (Mb)	NEWSGROUPS
PlusNet ADSL Office 500 - Self Install	www.plus.net	£64.63	£29.38	Unlimited	500	Yes
Poptel Home Office Basic 500	www.poptel.coop	£41.07	£293.69	5	10	Yes
Poptel Home User Basic 500	www.poptel.coop	£35.19	£176.19	5	10	Yes
Poptel Office Standard 500	www.poptel.coop	£92.83	£305.50	5	10	Yes
Scotland4me	www.scotland4me.net	£29.38	£70.50	Unlimited	50	No
Silvermead Broadband (Self-Install)	www.silvermead.net	£28.99	£65.00	15	10	Yes
Sniff Out DreamTime (Self-Install)	www.sniffout.net	£23.49	£58.75	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes
Sonnet Internet Office 1000 Self-Install	www.sonnetinternet.co.uk	£105.75	£70.50	500	250	Yes
Sonnet Internet Office 500 Self-Install	www.sonnetinternet.co.uk	£76.38	£70.50	500	250	Yes
Sonnet Internet Professional 500 Self-Install	www.sonnetinternet.co.uk	£29.38	£70.50	500	100	Yes
Star - Broad Star Remote	www.star.net.uk	£70.50	£293.75	0	0	No
Supanet - 0512Kbps	www.supanet.com	£29.99	£119.99	Unlimited	20	Yes
Timewarp ADSL Home User (Self-Install)	www.timewarp.co.uk	£29.99	£58.75	1	10	Yes
Timewarp ADSL Online User (Self-Install)	www.timewarp.co.uk	£28.20	£58.75	1	10	Yes
Timewarp ADSL SOHO User (Self-Install)	www.timewarp.co.uk	£40.00	£58.75	3	20	Yes
Timewarp Office 500 (Self-Install)	www.timewarp.co.uk	£94.00	£58.75	3	50	Yes
Tiscali Broadband (Self-Install)	www.tiscali.co.uk	£19.99	£50.00	6	100	Yes
Tiscali Broadband Plus (Self-Install)	www.tiscali.co.uk	£27.99	N/A	6	100	Yes
Tiscali T500	www.tiscali.co.uk	£89.29	£305.50	Unlimited	50	Yes
UTV Clicksilver Business	u.tv	£35.25	£58.75	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes
UTV Clicksilver Residential	u.tv	£27.50	£49.50	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes
V Two One Business 500 (Self-Install)	www.v21.co.uk	£64.63	£70.49	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes
V Two One Home User (Self-Install)	www.v21.co.uk	£19.99	£70.49	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes
V Two One Business 1000 (Self-Install)	www.v21.co.uk	£105.75	£70.49	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes
V Two One Business 2000 (Self-Install)	www.v21.co.uk	£159.25	£70.49	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes
VIA NETWORKS United Kingdom Basic 500 (Self-Install)	www.vianetworks.co.uk	£82.25	£58.75	30	50	Yes
Virgin.net Broadband (Self-Install)	www.virgin.net	£24.99	£39.99	5	10	Yes
Vispa Home 500 (Self-Install)	www.vispa.net	£28.99	£58.75	Unlimited	15	Yes
Vulture Capital ADSL Connect (Self-Install)	www.vcisp.net	£25.99	£65.00	25	25	Yes
ZenADSL Home (Self-Install)	www.zenadsl.com	£25.52	£25.00	5	50	Yes
ZenADSL Multi-User 512Kbps	www.zenadsl.com	£76.38	£305.50	5	50	Yes
ZenADSL Single-User 512Kbps	www.zenadsl.com	£29.99	£176.25	5	50	Yes
ZeNOC GamesStream 512	www.zenoc.net	£55.00	£100.00	5	20	Yes
ZeNOC WorkStream 512	www.zenoc.net	£115.00	£300.00	5	20	Yes

BROADBAND: CABLE

ISP	URL	MONTHLY COST	SETUP COST	EMAILS	WEB SPACE (Mb)	NEWSGROUPS
blueyonder broadband 1Mb	info.blueyonder.co.uk/	£39.99	£50.00	15	30	Yes
Blueyonder broadband 500	info.blueyonder.co.uk/	£29.99	£50.00	15	30	Yes
NTL 128K	www.ntl.co.uk	£14.99	£25.00	15	55	Yes
NTL 1Mb	www.ntl.co.uk	£49.99	N/A	15	55	Yes
NTL 600K	www.ntl.co.uk	£24.99	N/A	15	55	Yes

BROADBAND: SATELLITE

ISP	URL	MONTHLY COST	SETUP COST	EMAILS	WEB SPACE (Mb)	NEWSGROUPS
Bentley Walker Bronze Surfer	www.bentleywalker.com	£75.00	£100.00	0	0	No
BTopenworld Business Satellite 500/1	www.btopenworld.com/	£70.49	£1,056.33	20	20	Yes
BTopenworld Business Satellite 500/4	www.btopenworld.com/	£129.24	£1,526.33	100	20	Yes
Europe Online	www.europeonline.com	£6.36	N/A	5	0	Yes
HSIViaSat Home Edition	www.hsiviasat.com	£29.07	N/A	0	0	No
Mac-1 Internet USB Bronze	www.mac-1.com	£182.13	N/A	0	0	No
SatDrive	www.satdrive.com	£14.99	£399.00	0	0	No
Silvermead Satellite Broadband	www.silvermead.net	£34.99	£49.99	15	10	Yes
Skystorm	www.skystorm.net	£17.63	N/A	0	0	No
Starspeeder	www.starspeeder.co.uk	£17.63	N/A	0	0	No
Xantic	www.xanticbroadband.com	£29.38	£180.95	0	0	No

BROADBAND: WIRELESS

ISP	URL	MONTHLY COST	SETUP COST	EMAILS	WEB SPACE (Mb)	NEWSGROUPS
IAP Broadband	www.iap.uk.net	£29.99	£150.00	10	10	Yes
IAP Broadband X2	www.iap.uk.net	£39.99	£150.00	10	10	Yes
IAP Unmetered	www.iap.uk.net	£11.99	£150.00	5	5	Yes
IAP Unmetered X2	www.iap.uk.net	£19.99	£150.00	5	5	Yes
Liberty Broadband (business)	www.libertybroadband.co.uk	£111.61	£175.08	Unlimited	20	Yes
Liberty Broadband (consumer)	www.libertybroadband.co.uk	£46.99	£175.08	10	20	Yes

IN ASSOCIATION WITH
www.net4nowt.com
Net 4 Nowt

0845 INTERNET PROVIDERS

NAME	URL	EMAILS	WEB SPACE (Mb)	NEWSGROUPS	SUPPORT COSTS	V90	K64	K128
Abel GRATIS Plus	www.abelgratis.co.uk	Unlimited	50	Yes	Premium - 25p	Yes	Yes	Yes
BlueCarrots Anywhere	www.bluecarrots.com	15	10	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	Yes
blueyonder	www.blueyonder.co.uk	15	30	Yes	Free	Yes	Yes	Yes
Breathepro Easyconnect	www.breathe.com	25	25	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes	No
British Library Net	www.britishlibrary.net	Unlimited	20	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	No
BT Access	www.btclickforbusiness.com	10	20	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	No
CharityDAYS Donate At Home Free	www.charitydays.net	Unlimited	25	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes	No
CharityDAYS Donate At Work Free	www.charitydays.net	Unlimited	50	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes
Chilly Hippo	www.chilly-hippo.co.uk	Unlimited	50	Yes	Premium - 25p	Yes	Yes	Yes
ClaraNET	www.clara.net	Unlimited	10	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clearsignals	www.clearsignals.net	Unlimited	25	Yes	Premium - 25p	Yes	Yes	Yes
Club 24 Internet	www.club24.co.uk	Unlimited	20	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	Yes
Dabs netdial	www.dabs.net	25	25	No	Local Rate	Yes	Yes	No
Dabsol	www.dabs.net	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	No
Demon Express Total (Self-Install)	www.demon.net	Unlimited	20	Yes	Local Rate	NK	Yes	Yes
Devilnet United Kingdom	www.devilnet.co.uk	Unlimited	25	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	Yes
EidosNet	www.eidosnet.co.uk	Unlimited	20	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	Yes
E-Plus	www.e-plus.co.uk	Unlimited	15	Yes	National Rate	Yes	Yes	No
Euphony.net	www.euphony.net	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	Yes
Everywhere Broadband	www.everywherebroadband.com	10	20	Yes	NK	NK	Yes	Yes
Fasthosts LoCall	dial.fasthosts.co.uk	Unlimited	200	Yes	Standard BT	Yes	Yes	No
Firenet	www.firenet.uk.net	15	10	Yes	National Rate	Yes	Yes	No
Flyer Internet	internet.flyer.co.uk	Unlimited	25	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	Yes
Force9 Business Free	www.force9.co.uk	Unlimited	50	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes
Force9 Free	www.force9.co.uk	Unlimited	25	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes
Free United Kingdom	www.freeuk.net	Unlimited	25	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes	No
Freebeeb	www.beeb.net	Unlimited	20	Yes	Premium - 60p	Yes	Yes	No
Freedom 2 Surf	www.freedom2surf.net	Unlimited	25	Yes	Standard BT	Yes	Yes	Yes
FreeNEasy	www.freeneasy.net	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	Standard BT	Yes	Yes	Yes
FreeNet	www.freenet.co.uk	Unlimited	25	Yes	National Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes
Freenetname	www.freenetname.co.uk	Unlimited	20	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	No	No
Freeola.net	www.freeola.com	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	National Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes
Free-Online Business Free	www.free-online.co.uk	Unlimited	50	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes
Free-Online Free	www.free-online.co.uk	Unlimited	25	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes
Freeserve NoTies	www.freeserve.com	Unlimited	150	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	No
FreeUnited Kingdom	www.freeuk.co.uk	Unlimited	25	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes	No
Freewire	www.freewire.net	Unlimited	50	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	Yes
FreeZone	www.freezone.co.uk	Unlimited	20	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes
Games Terminal	www.gterminal.net	Unlimited	20	Yes	National Rate	Yes	No	No
Go There Internet	www.gothere.uk.com	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	Premium - 25p	Yes	Yes	Yes
GoFree	www.gofree.co.uk	Unlimited	20	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	Yes
Go-Legend	www.go-legend.net	Unlimited	10	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	Yes
GPAnet	www.gpanet.co.uk	Unlimited	25	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hot-Toast	www.hot-toast.com	Unlimited	Unlimited	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	No
i12	www.i12.com	Unlimited	500	Yes	National Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes
IofM.net	www.iofm.net	Unlimited	Unlimited	No	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	Yes
IXUnited Kingdom	www.ixuk.com	Unlimited	20	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	Yes
JellyPeople.com	www.jellypeople.com	Unlimited	25	Yes	Premium - 25p	Yes	Yes	Yes
Loyal Mail	www.loyalmail.co.uk	Unlimited	25	Yes	Free	Yes	Yes	No
MacUnlimited	www.macunlimited.net	Unlimited	25	Yes	National Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mersinet	www.mersinet.co.uk	Unlimited	25	Yes	Premium - 25p	Yes	Yes	Yes
Messages	www.messages.co.uk	Unlimited	25	Yes	National Rate	Yes	Yes	No
Ministry of Sound	www.ministryofsound.net	Unlimited	20	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	No
MWfree.net	www.mwfree.net	Unlimited	20	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	No	No
MyETI	www.eti.uk.com	Unlimited	15	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	No
NASCR	www.nascr.net	Unlimited	20	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	No
NetDirect Online	www.instant.ndo.com	Unlimited	20	Yes	National Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes
One Way Internet - PAYG	www.onewayinternet.co.uk	Unlimited	100	No	Premium - 25p	Yes	Yes	Yes
Onet	www.onet.co.uk	Unlimited	30	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	No
OnlineServe Dial Lite	www.onlineserve.co.uk	Unlimited	10	Yes	Free	Yes	Yes	Yes
Oxfree	www.oxfree.com	Unlimited	20	Yes	Standard BT	Yes	Yes	Yes
PlusNet Business Free	www.plus.net	Unlimited	50	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes
PlusNet Free	www.plus.net	Unlimited	25	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes
Prontoserve	www.Prontoserve.net	Unlimited	25	Yes	Premium - 50p	No	Yes	Yes
Qadisho	www.qadisho.com	15	10	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	No
Rapidial	www.Rapidial.co.uk	Unlimited	25	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	Yes
RugbyWeb	www.rugbyweb.co.uk	Unlimited	20	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	No	No
Sniff Out Classic	www.sniffout.net	Unlimited	50	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sonnet Internet Just Dial	www.sonnetinternet.co.uk	Unlimited	25	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes
South West Net	www.swest.co.uk	Unlimited	25	Yes	National Rate	Yes	Yes	No
Sparticus.net	www.sparticus.net	Unlimited	25	Yes	Premium - 60p	Yes	Yes	Yes
Supanet Classic	www.supanet.com	Unlimited	20	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	No
SurfAnytime	www.surfanytime.co.uk	15	10	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	No
Tellnet	www.tellnet.co.uk	Unlimited	25	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes
Tiscali Pay As You Go	www.tiscali.co.uk	Unlimited	100	Yes	Premium - 50p	Yes	Yes	No
Vispa Connect Valuetime	www.vispa.net	Unlimited	15	Yes	National Rate	Yes	Yes	Yes
Vulture Capital Easy Connect	www.vcisp.net	25	25	Yes	Local Rate	Yes	Yes	No
Waitrose.com	www.waitrose.com	Unlimited	20	Yes	Free	Yes	Yes	No

TOP BUYS

Digital cameras

Nikon CoolPix 4500

£599
www.nikon.co.uk
What's good? Quality snapper that yields great results with very little effort
What's bad? Looks really weird
Telephone: 020 8481 6875
Verdict: 90%

Kodak CX4230

£199.99
www.kodak.co.uk
What's good? Nice range of easy-to-use features
What's bad? Needs newer hardware to run at full pelt
Telephone: 0870 243 0270
Verdict: 84%

Rioch Caplio RR1

£749.99
www.rioch.co.uk
What's good? A sleek slimline camera with oodles of quality to boot
What's bad? Looks a bit cheap and the zoom is a little bit dodgy
Telephone: 01782 753300
Verdict: 90%

Pentax Optio 330

£499
www.pentax.co.uk
What's good? Excellent features and options. Compact and cheap at the price
What's bad? Its bulk can be bothersome
Telephone: 01753 792792
Verdict: 91%

Buyers' guide

Which ISP?

TOP BUYS

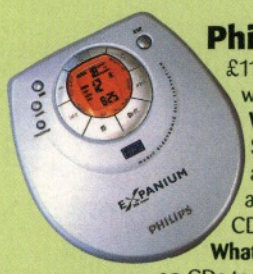
MP3 Players

Apple iPod

£349.99
www.apple.com/uk
What's good? Brilliant sound quality and the best designed player on the market
What's bad? It isn't compatible with Windows and it's overpriced
Telephone: 0800 039 1010
Verdict: 82%

Iomega HipZip

£290
www.iomega-europe.com
What's good? Uses removable media instead of flash memory, which is cheaper
What's bad? Bulkier and heavier than the Rio, also expensive
Telephone: 020 7365 9527
Verdict: 78%



Philips EXP303

£119.99
www.philips.com
What's good? Stylish, inexpensive and easy to use. It actually plays MP3 CDs!
What's bad? Still relies on CDs to play music
Telephone: 020 8665 6350
Verdict: 79%

Nomad Jukebox 3

£349.99
www.creative.com/europe
What's good? Huge storage capacity and stunning sound quality
What's bad? Odd navigation system and PC interface
Telephone: N/A
Verdict: 92%

UNMETERED INTERNET PROVIDERS

ISP	URL	COST	FRIACO	BT LINE REQ	EMAILS	WEB SPACE (Mb)	NEWSGROUPS	SUPPORT COSTS
0800Dial Home User	www.0800dial.com	£12.99	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
0800onlineserve	www.0800.onlineserve.co.uk	£14.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	10	Yes	Free
1066ad.com Maxi Surf	www.1066ad.com	£14.99	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
1066ad.com Mini Surf	www.1066ad.com	£10.99	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
123ISP Standard	www.123isp.co.uk	£13.99	Yes	Yes	7	10	Yes	National Rate
123ISP Twilight	www.123isp.co.uk	£4.95	Yes	Yes	7	10	Yes	National Rate
123ISP Twin Lite	www.123isp.co.uk	£18.95	Yes	Yes	7	10	Yes	National Rate
24-7Freecall	www.24-7freecall.net	£14.99	Yes	Yes	7	10	Yes	National Rate
4theNET Business Anytime	www.4thenet.co.uk	£23.49	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
4theNet Unlimited 24/7	www.4thenet.co.uk	£12.99	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
4theNET Unlimited Daytime	www.4thenet.co.uk	£4.99	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
4theNET Unlimited Off-peak	www.4thenet.co.uk	£9.99	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
Abel DIAL Anytime	www.abelalways.co.uk	£27.99	No	No	Unlimited	50	Yes	Premium – 25p
Abel DIAL Leisuretime	www.abelalways.co.uk	£11.99	No	No	Unlimited	50	Yes	Premium – 25p
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Arsenal AnyTime	www.arsenal.com	£12.99	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
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Blueyonder SurfUnlimited	www.blueyonder.co.uk	£12.00	No	No	15	30	Yes	Premium – 50p
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Breathe At Home	www.breathe.com	£9.99	Yes	Yes	5	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
Breathe Plus	www.breathe.com	£19.99	Yes	Yes	5	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
Breathe Unlimited	www.breathe.com	£13.99	Yes	Yes	5	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
Breathepro Connect	www.breathe.com	£15.99	Yes	Yes	25	25	Yes	Local Rate
BT Connect Lite Anytime	www.btclickforbusiness.com	£17.63	Yes	Yes	20	20	Yes	Premium – 50p
BTopenworld Anytime	www.btopenworld.com	£15.99	Yes	Yes	10	50	Yes	Free
BTopenworld for BT Surf	www.btopenworld.com	£12.99	No	Yes	5	10	Yes	Free
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Business Unmetered Business User 24	www.business-unmetered.com	£21.14	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
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ClaraNET FreeTime AnyTime	www.clara.net	£14.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	50	Yes	Local Rate
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ClaraNET FreeTime Unlimited	www.clara.net	£9.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	50	Yes	Local Rate
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Freechariot FC Unlimited	www.freechariot.co.uk	£13.99	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
Freedom2Surf Anytime	www.freedom2surf.net	£11.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	20	Yes	Standard BT
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MacAce Homefree24	www.macace.net	£16.00	Yes	Yes	5	0	No	National Rate
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PlusNet Connect Biz	www.plus.net	£39.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	500	Yes	Local Rate
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PlusNet Connect Heavy User	www.plus.net	£29.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	250	Yes	Local Rate
PlusNet Connect Lite User	www.plus.net	£8.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	250	Yes	Local Rate
PlusNet Connect Standard	www.plus.net	£14.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	250	Yes	Local Rate
Powergen Anytime	www.pgen.net	£13.99	Yes	Yes	5	10	Yes	National Rate
Powergen Daytime	www.pgen.net	£9.99	Yes	Yes	5	10	Yes	National Rate
Powergen Evenings & Weekends	www.pgen.net	£9.99	Yes	Yes	5	10	Yes	National Rate
Qadisho Business Unlimited	www.qadisho.com	£12.99	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
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SafariConnect Anytime	www.safariconnect.com	£12.99	Yes	Yes	5	15	Yes	Premium – 50p
SafariConnect Home&Away	www.safariconnect.com	£19.99	Yes	Yes	5	15	Yes	Premium – 50p
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Southgrove Surfer+	www.southgrove.com	£9.99	Yes	Yes	7	0	Yes	National Rate
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Southgrove Twilight Surfer	www.southgrove.com	£5.95	Yes	Yes	7	0	Yes	National Rate
SupaNet Supahighway	www.supanet.com	£14.99	No	Yes	Unlimited	20	Yes	Premium – 50p
SurfAnytime Business Unlimited	www.surfanytime.co.uk	£14.08	Yes	Yes	100	100	Yes	Premium – 50p
SurfAnytime Diamond	www.surfanytime.co.uk	£29.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	50	Yes	Premium – 50p
SurfAnytime Diamond Plus	www.surfanytime.co.uk	£34.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	75	Yes	Premium – 50p
SurfAnytime Gold	www.surfanytime.co.uk	£15.49	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
SurfAnytime HomeTime	www.surfanytime.co.uk	£4.99	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
SurfAnytime OffPeak	www.surfanytime.co.uk	£9.99	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
SurfAnytime Silver	www.surfanytime.co.uk	£12.99	Yes	Yes	15	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
Surfmore	www.surfmore.co.uk	£14.99	Yes	Yes	3	0	No	N/A
Tesco.net Anytime	www.tesco.net	£12.99	Yes	Yes	5	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
Tesco.net Daytime	www.tesco.net	£5.99	Yes	Yes	5	10	Yes	Premium – 50p
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Timewarp 100 Evenings & Weekends	www.timewarp.co.uk	£12.64	No	Yes	6	20	Yes	National Rate
Tiny T:Surf Value	www.tinyonline.net	£8.99	Yes	Yes	5	15	Yes	Premium – 50p
TinyT:SurfPlus	www.tinyonline.net	£14.99	Yes	Yes	5	15	Yes	Premium – 50p
Tiscali Anytime	www.tiscali.co.uk	£14.99	Yes	Yes	Unlimited	100	Yes	Premium – 50p
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www.creative.com
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What's bad? The image resolution could be better, sometimes comes loose
Telephone: 00 353 1 4333200
Verdict: 79%

Creative Webcam Go Plus

£129
www.europe.creative.com
What's good? Innovative design. Can be used as a digital camera. Good range of features
What's bad? Expensive. The digital camera aspect of the Go Plus is a tad gimmicky
Telephone: 01245 265265
Verdict: 82%

Sony CMR-PC2

£89.99
www.sonyisstorage.com
What's good? It's tiny, yet somehow manages to squeeze in the best picture quality we've seen yet
What's bad? It's a little bit fiddly to operate
Telephone: 00800 2623 7669
Verdict: 84%

Logitech ClickSmart 310

£69.99
www.logitech.com
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What's bad? Picture quality is far from stunning
Telephone: 01753 870900
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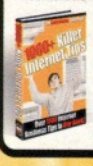

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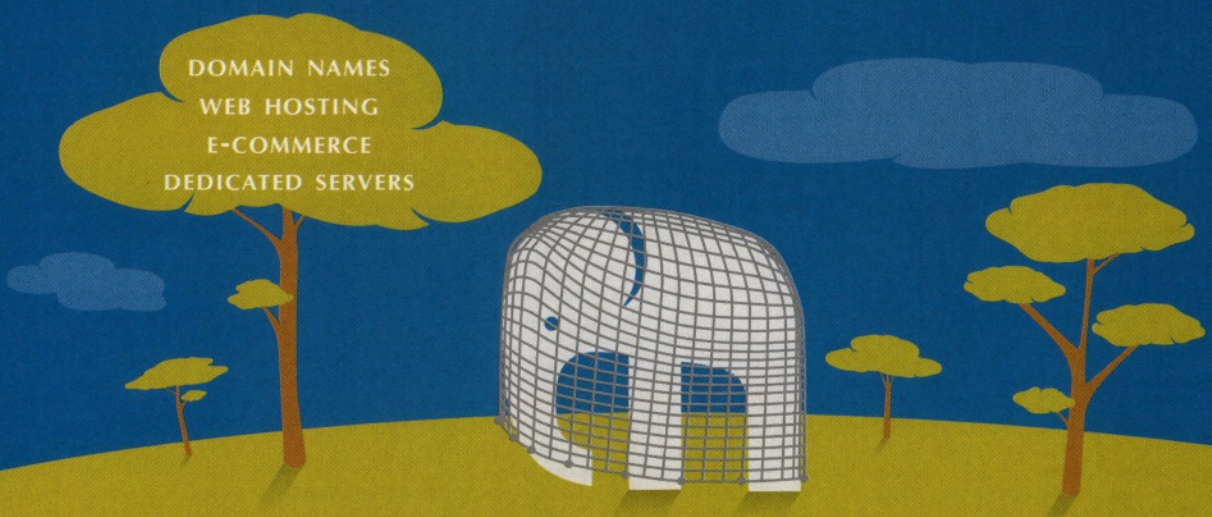

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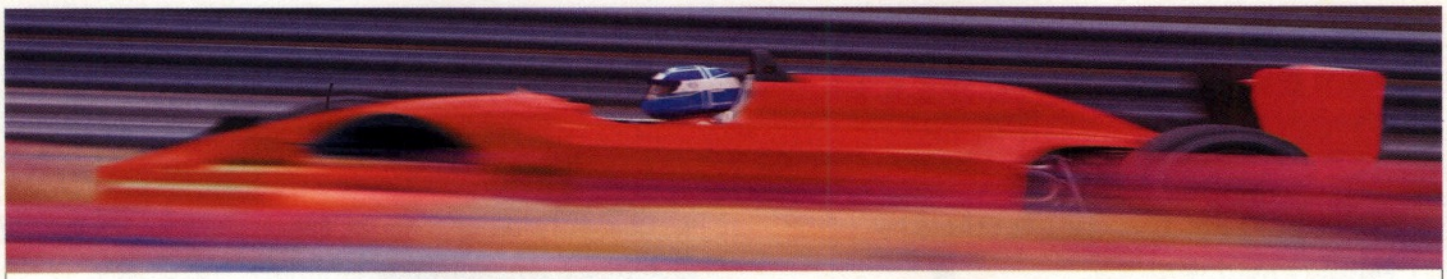

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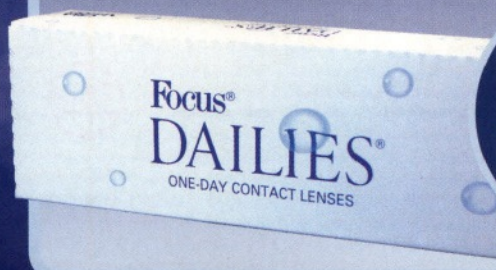

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WEB'S MOST WANTED

WE NEED YOUR HELP IN TRACKING DOWN THESE HOME PAGE CRIMINALS

Name: Alex Chiu

Last seen at:
www.alexchiu.com

Wanted for:
Bribery. Chiu is known to be offering his patented 'Eternal Life Device' free to anyone placing an ad banner linking to his home page on their site. As a result, he hopes someone important will read about his vision of a new world order where the planet lives in peace and robot farmers make free food for everyone in giant skyscraper farms.

Characteristics:
Contrary to reports, Alex Chiu is NOT the messiah, rather a prophet who is enabling someone else to become the messiah by pioneering an immortality device. When he's not training the Second Coming, the former sushi chef enjoys German classical music and watching Alicia Silverstone films. In fact he is endeavouring "to make everyone as beautiful as Alicia" with his invention.

Significant others:
The Chinese inventor has a legion of followers who pay testament to his revolutionary Eternal Life Rings and Foot Braces. Witnesses who are well on the way to living forever include Crystal Shu, whose hair regrowth has allowed her to ditch her wig and land a nice job in a frame shop. After two years of problems, Bob Silver's 'little guy' is now standing to attention, and he is regularly able to maintain an erection for three weeks.

Quote:
"If you are a multi-billionaire, your chance of becoming the messiah is even greater"

Name: Gary Duschl

Last seen at:
www.gumwrapper.com

Wanted for:
Harbouring chewing gum wrappers. Lots of them. Duschl has proved that he isn't afraid to use wrappers of mass production, having entered the Guinness Book of Records for creating the world's largest chain chewing gum paper chain. Containing one million wrappers, the chain is 42,908 feet long, making it equal in length to 143 football pitches, or 29 Empire State Buildings.

Characteristics:
After devoting almost 40 years to the production of his chain, Duschl is thought to be something of a recluse. Little is known about his private life, if indeed he has one at all. However, we do know that the iron-jawed record-breaker is a big fan of Seventies pop icon Jonathon Richman, whose hit 'Chewing Gum Wrapper' is a big favourite.

Significant others:
Duschl is known to be chewsy over who he deals with, though he has had dealings with Hollywood leading lights. It's no secret, for instance, that Rosie O'Donnell once sent him a box of chewing gum. Intelligence reports suggest that Duschl is brainwashing people into following him, using the Net to explain how to manufacture home-made chewing gum chains, prompting outrage from police and public safety groups.

Quote:
"Save, sign and send me your Wrigley gum wrappers and I will ensure that these wrappers become part of this world record gum wrapper chain."

Practical internet

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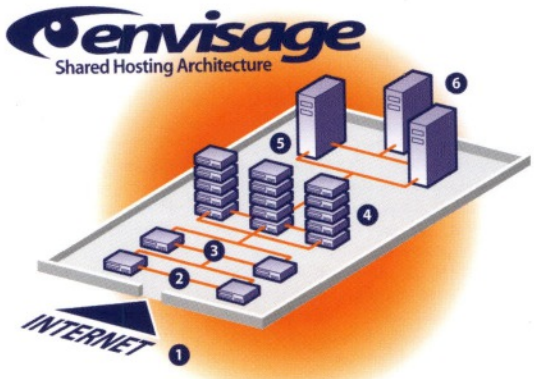

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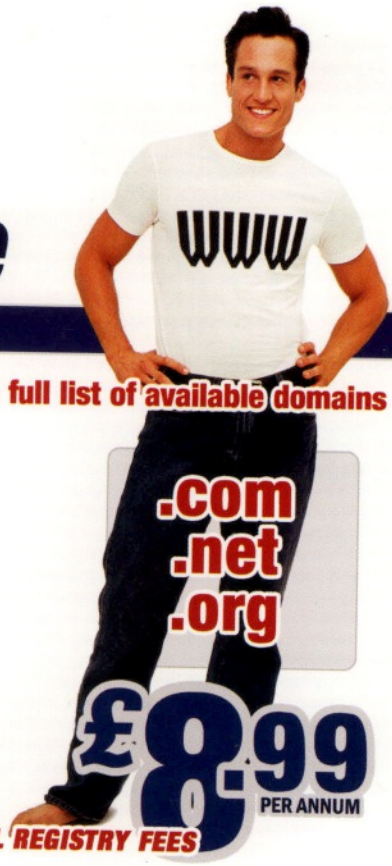

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